

DRAGON TSUNAMI

A Collection of Japanese Folktales

Translated from Japanese by

HEMA PANDE

Illustrations

Arup Gupta



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NATIONAL BOOK TRUST, INDIA



ISBN 978-81-237-5808-4

First Edition 2010

Reprints 2011, 2014 (*Saka* 1935)

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Translation © National Book Trust, India

Dragon Tsunami (*Hindi Original*)

₹ 95.00

Published by the Director, National Book Trust, India

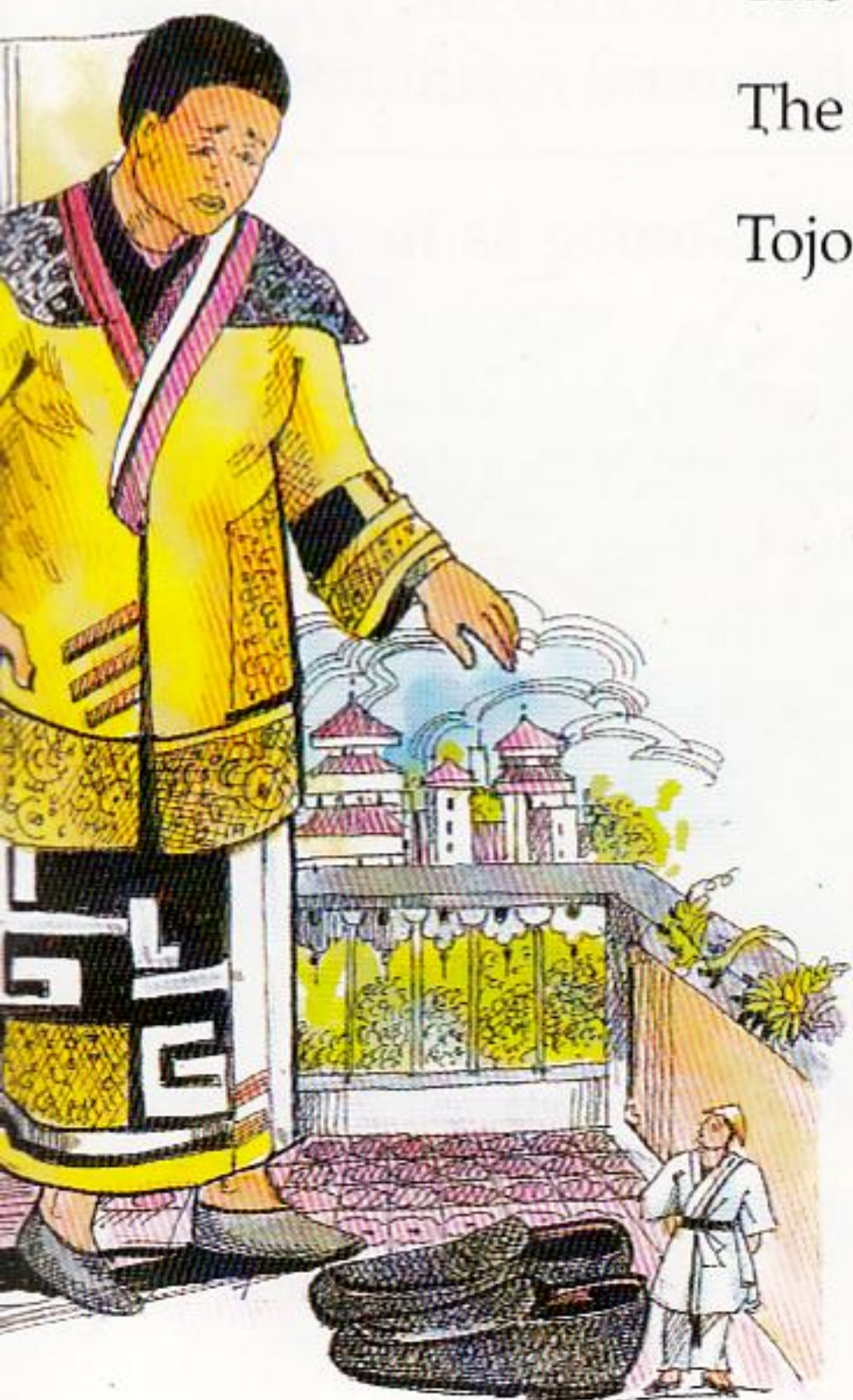
Nehru Bhawan, 5 Institutional Area, Phase-II

Vasant Kunj, New Delhi-110 070

Website: www.nbtindia.gov.in

Contents

A Dragon Called Tsunami	4
Momotaro, The Peach-boy	9
Issunboshi—The One Inch Samurai	18
The Magic Grinding-stone	26
The Merry Old Man with a Wart	33
The Bride Who Never Ate	37
Mountain Pears	44
The Cloud-Demon	52
The Dragon King's Daughter	59
Tojo and the Mountain Witch	68





A Dragon Called Tsunami

Japan is a beautiful island country. But it has volcanoes, earthquakes, typhoons and terrifying tidal waves called 'Tsunami'. In the Japanese language, 'Tsunami' means strong/seismic tidal wave.

Long ago, the Japanese people believed that a ferocious dragon named Tsunami slept below the sea. Whenever it was disturbed by an earthquake, it would leap up angrily from its ocean-bed. Powerful and monstrous, it would hurtle itself up violently and sweep furiously across the land drowning people and animals and devastating entire villages.

This story is about the heroism and determination of a single young man who was determined to save the lives of the people of his village island. It depicts the self-sacrifice and discipline with which the Japanese people struggle with natural calamities.

"Oh...how terrible...terrible!" shouted Gombe as he rushed out of his hill-top house shaking with fear.

The earthquake was over in less than a minute. Gombe lived on a very small island off the coast of the main island of Japan. He was quite used to earthquakes, but this time the tremor was very powerful and had lasted longer than usual. Even now, the weird rumbles echoing from the bowels of the earth were really terrifying.

Gombe looked down uneasily at the village nestling below the hill. It seemed that all the people were so busy in their fields preparing for the harvest festival that they had not even noticed the earthquake!

Then Gombe looked towards the sea and gaped horror-stricken to see that the wind was blowing in the wrong direction...it was blowing

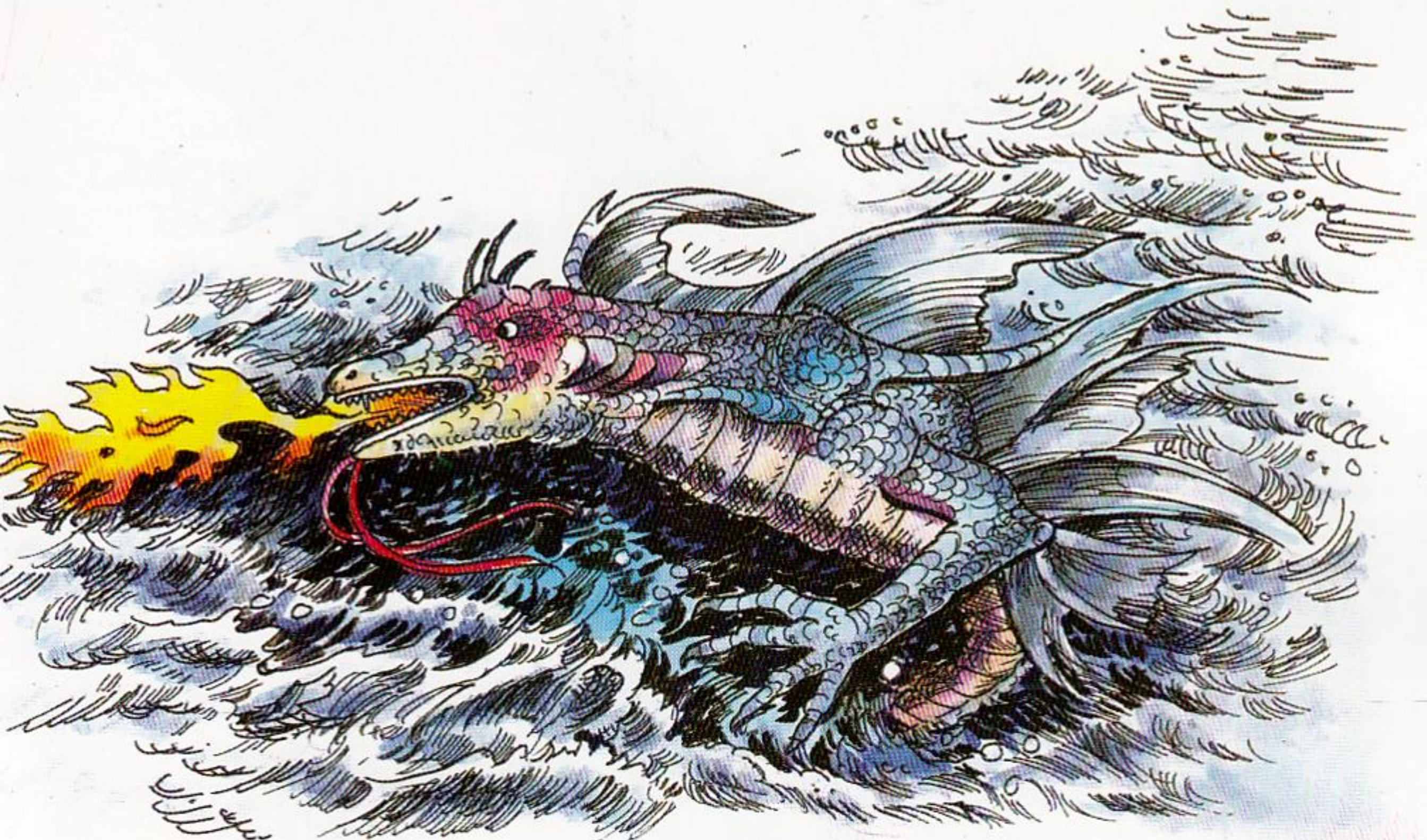
from the land and towards the sea!

"Oh, God help us! Tsunami is coming to destroy us!" shrieked Gombe as heavy gale winds swept from the shore, hurling the waves away from the beach, revealing the sandy wastes and black rocks that had been covered by the ocean water.

"It will swallow the whole village in one gulp," thought Gombe. Rushing into his little house, he ran out again holding a flaming torch of pinewood.

On the hill-top in front of his house lay tall stacks of rice-straw piled high, ready to be stored away in his barn.

"I will lose everything! My house and harvest will all be destroyed..." thought Gombe, "but I must save the villagers... whatever the cost!"



An agony of pain and fear twisted his stomach. His legs trembled, but his hand was steady as he thrust the fiery torch into the stacks of rice straw. In a second the flames caught and sparks leaped up like frightened fireflies fanned by the sweeping wind. Dry, brittle rice stacks...crackling, red hot flames flying up like fiery tongues...hissing, destroying....



Now all the tall stacks were aflame, like gigantic torches, pointing heavenwards.

Gombe dropped the pine torch. For a moment, he stood still as if he was lost in a terrible nightmare. The sun was setting and a grey, blue twilight was creeping hazily over the hill. Blazing flames from the straw stacks were leaping up and up, as if to burn the sky!

Way down at the village temple, bells pealed out...loudly...clearly... "Fire! Fire! Gombe's house is on fire!" Some youngsters among the villagers raced up the hill. Then came other men, women and children as if in hot pursuit.

To Gombe, however, as he started down impatiently, they seemed to be crawling up irritatingly slow, like a line of ants.

At last, a group of boys clambered up to where Gombe was standing and they started putting out the fire. Gombe roared, "Leave that alone! Call all the villagers to come quickly here...here...HERE!"

The villagers came...more and more...running, leaping, falling to get to the top of Gombe's hill. Gombe ran from one person to another. He shouted out their names, he counted them eagerly...one-by-one.

"Has Gombe gone mad?" whispered the villagers to one another. They stared at his burning house and rice stacks and then at his face.

Suddenly, Gombe turned, shouting with all this strength, "Look! Look! Here it comes...the Dragon!"

Everyone turned to see where he pointed to a place far away on the distant horizon where a faint line like a thin black line seemed to rise and throb in the sky. Within seconds it grew enormous, filling up the entire sky and rushing towards them at a tremendous speed!

"Tsunami! Tsunami!" someone screamed. Before their very eyes, the entire ocean rose up and up...higher and higher, touching the sky like a massive, black dragon, hurtling upon the beach with a tremendous, exploding roar!

Up on Gombe's hill, the people leapt back. For a few terrifying, blinding moments, except for the foamy water-mist, nothing else could be seen.

Then they saw the Tsunami, like an insane, untamed force, sweep

violently over their entire village. Again and again it hurled over their homes and fields...twice...thrice... The villagers looked down bewildered, staring dazedly at their devastated village that had been scooped out and flung back by the gigantic tidal wave.

The fire of the rice stacks fanned by the wind burnt and flared again. It cast a warm, red glow on the villagers, making them slowly aware, that their lives had been spared only because of it!

Humbly, thankfully folding their hands, they bowed before the courageous Gombe.

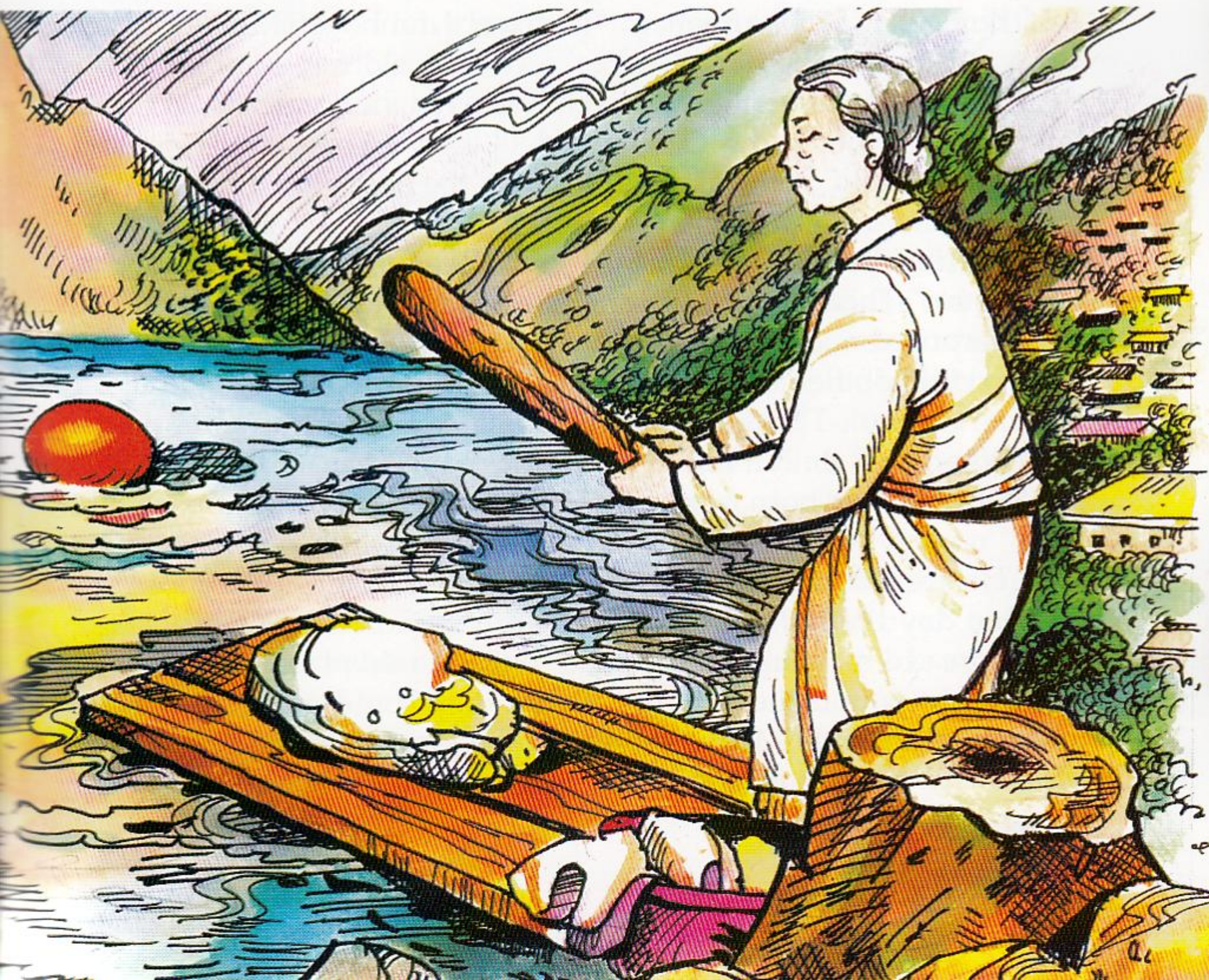




Momotaro, the Peach-boy

Long, long ago an old man and his wife lived in a small mountain village in Japan. Every day he went up the mountains to gather firewood while his wife looked after the house. She also went to the nearby river to wash clothes and her pots and pans.

One day, as she sat on the river bank washing her clothes...*jya...*



ab...jya...ab, she saw something far away that was coming along floating on the water. "I wonder what that can be?" she thought. Floating, floating...*don...bura, ...don...bura*, it came closer and closer. She saw that it was a very, very large, red peach!

"What a beautiful peach!" she exclaimed and called out to it:

"Big peach, big peach,

Come to me.

Red peach, red peach,

Come to me."

The peach floated towards her. "Lovely peach, do come. I'm so glad you've come to me," cried the old woman happily. Picking it up, she placed it in her basket along with the washed clothes. She carried it very carefully all the way to her house.

When the old man returned from the mountain in the evening, she told him what had happened. "Just see! I found this lovely peach today floating on the river."

He was astonished to see such a large, red, heavy peach. "I'm sure it will be delicious and juicy," he said. "I'll get a knife."

When the old man was about to cut it, the peach burst open with a loud *BON...!*

From inside the peach came the sound of a baby crying "...oo...gwa, ...oo...gwa!" Then a sweet little baby boy came out of the peach! Oh, how surprised and joyful the old couple were to see the baby! They had no child of their own so they said, "Surely, this is God's gift to us. *Arigato, arigato...* Thank you, thank you."

"What shall we call him?" asked the old woman.

"Since he was born from a peach, let's call him Momotaro (Peach-boy)," replied the old man. They looked after the little boy with loving care. He grew up tall, healthy and extremely strong.

One day the old man and his wife wanted to make rice cakes. They spread a mat out in the garden so they could place a mortar on it in order to pound the rice. But before they could get it, they were amazed to see little Momotaro lift up the large mortar. It was much bigger and heavier than himself, but he carried it easily out to the

garden. "What a strong boy he is," they said to each other.

Not only was Momotaro strong and energetic, he was also kind, gentle and helpful to everyone.

The old man taught Momotaro to read and write. The peach-boy worked hard at his studies and never forgot anything he had been taught. He grew up to be a fine, strong lad.

At that time, many fierce demons lived on a nearby island. Often they came in their boats to raid the homes of the peaceful villagers. They killed and wounded many people. Whenever the demons came, the terrified villagers, including Momotaro's parents, fled from their homes and hid in the forests of the mountain till the demons went away.

When Momotaro saw the sadness and misery of his parents and the other villagers, he decided to fight the demons.

"Father, Mother, I have made up my mind to go to Demon Island. I will kill those terrible creatures."

"You are too young. The demons are very fierce and powerful. It's too dangerous for you to go alone to fight them. They will surely kill you!" cried his anxious parents.

"No, no. I'm very strong," replied Momotaro. "Please don't worry about me. I must protect all of you. I'll return safely...you'll see."

The old man dressed Momotaro like a warrior and the old woman made lots of *kibi-tango* (millet balls) and packed a lunch box for him. Momotaro hung a sword from his belt and, putting the lunch box into a bag, hung it from his shoulder. Then he bowed before his parents. "Please don't be nervous or worry about me. I'll defeat the demons and return safely," he promised them.

"Be careful!" cried the anxious old couple.

Momotaro carried a flag on which was written: *Nippon Ichi* (the best in Japan), and his parents said "*Sayonara.... Good-bye,*" to him.

As Momotaro walked briskly away, ...*zun...zun...*a big white dog came bounding up to him.

"Wang, wang.... Bow, wow. Momotaro-San, I see you are dressed like a warrior. Where are you going?" he asked.

"I'm going to the Demon Island to fight the dreadful demons," replied Momotaro.

"And what are you carrying in that bag over your shoulder?" asked the dog.

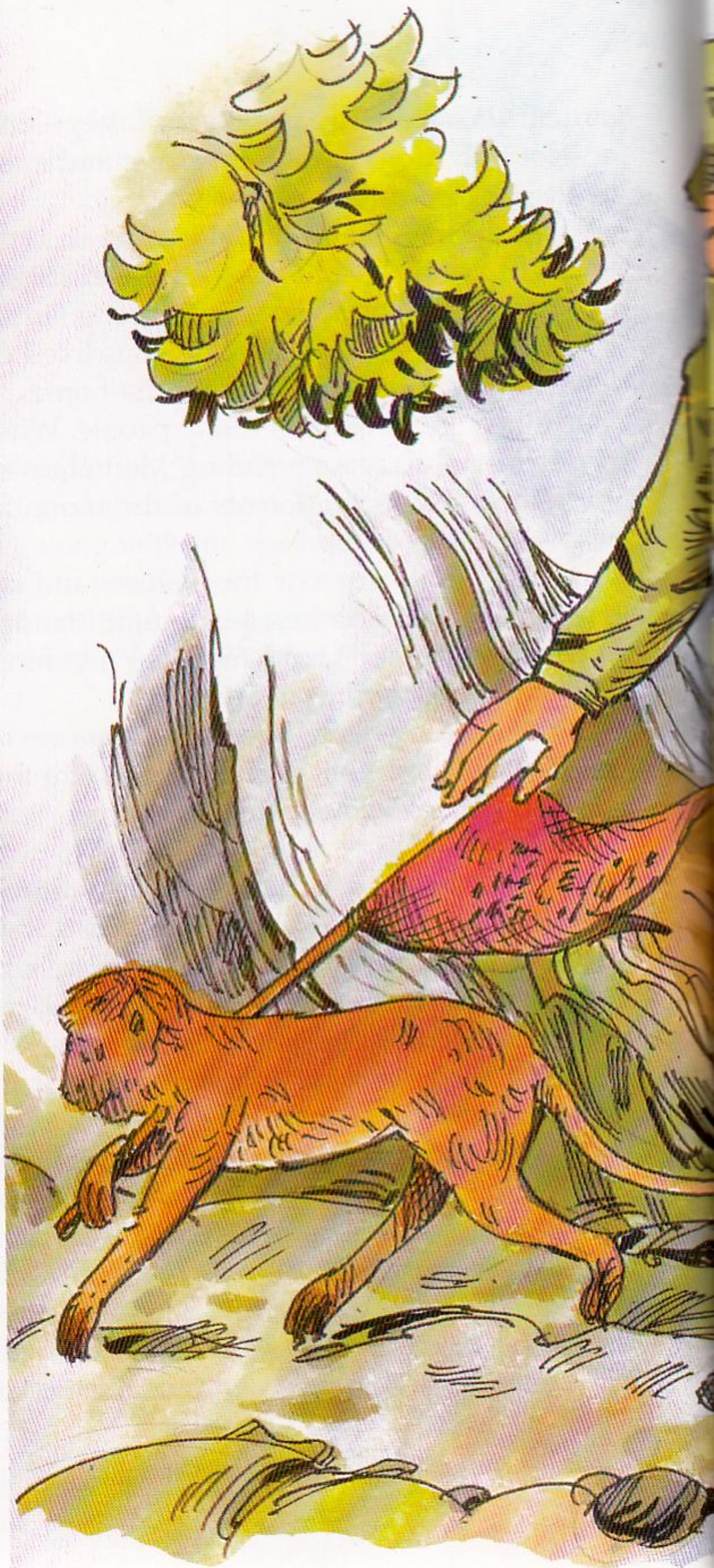
"Mother made lots of *kibi-tango* for me to eat," replied Momotaro. "If you'll be my helper and come to the Demon Island with me to fight the demons, I'll give you a *kibi-tango*."

"Hai...hai.... Yes, yes. I'll go with you and be your helper," said the dog happily. So Momotaro gave him a *kibi-tango*.

"*Arigato, arigato....* Thank you, thank you Momotaro-San," barked the dog as he ate it.

"Let's go," cried Momotaro as the dog walked beside him holding his flag.

As they continued along the mountain road, a monkey jumped down from a tree and





said, "Momotaro-San, where are you going with that dog by your side carrying your flag?"

"I'm going to the Demon Island to fight the demons," answered Momotaro.

"And what are you carrying in that bag on your shoulder?" asked the monkey.

"I'm carrying the best *kibi-tango* in Japan," said Momotaro.

"Will you please give me one?" asked the monkey. "I'll also be your helper and go to the Demon Island with you to help fight the demons."

"All right. You can have one, too," said Momotaro as he gave the monkey a *kibi-tango*. "Now you are my helper also."

As they went along, the dog and the monkey began to quarrel. "Bow-wow. I'm a much more useful helper than you are," barked the dog.

"No, no. I'm much better than you!" screeched the monkey.

Hearing them arguing, Momotaro exclaimed, "Stop! Stop! Do not fight with each other. You must be good friends or you will not be able to help me fight the demons." The dog and the monkey stopped quarreling and the monkey was asked to help carry the flag.

When they came down to the meadows, a large, lovely pheasant came flying towards them. It perched on Momotaro's flag.

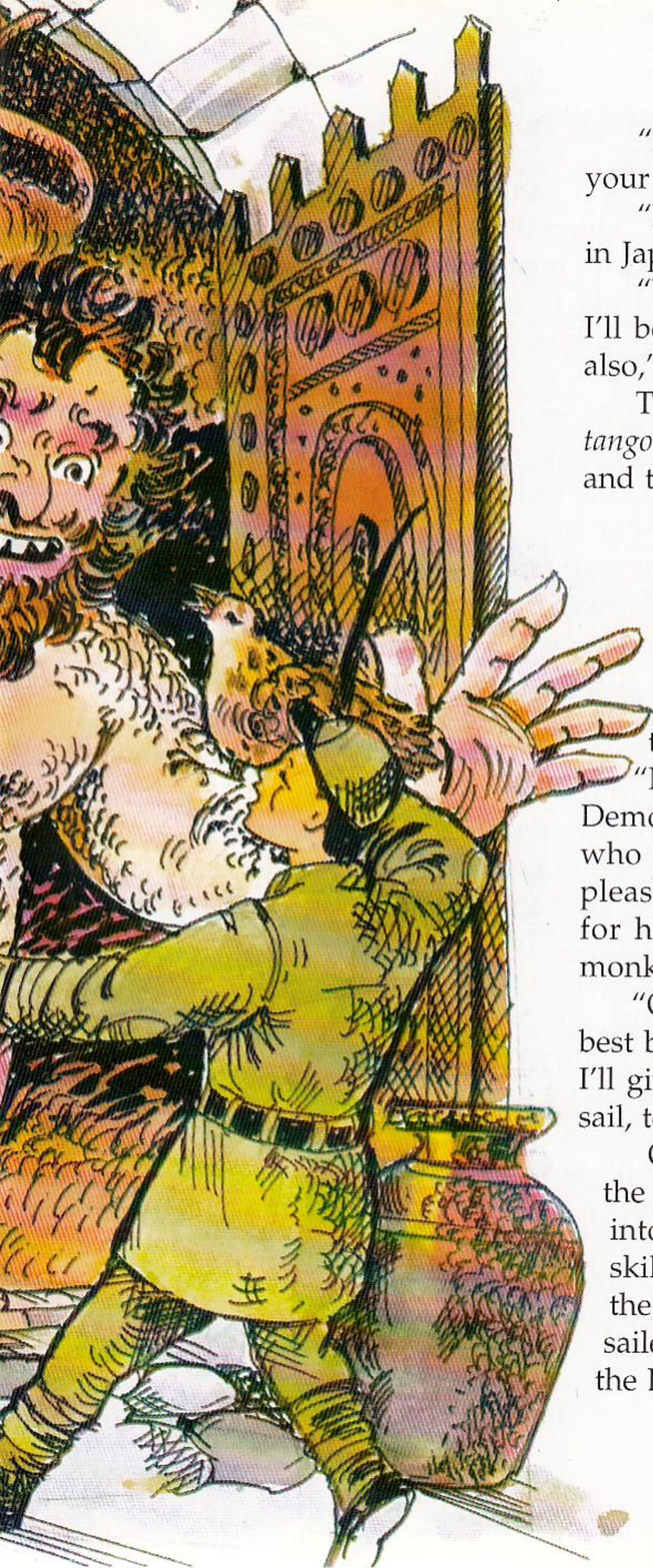
"Mr Monkey, where are you going holding this flag?" asked the pheasant.

"Please don't perch on Momotaro's flag!" cried the monkey. "Come down quickly."

So the pheasant flew down and stood before Momotaro. "Momotaro-San, where are you going with the dog and the monkey?" she asked.

"I'm going to the Demon Island to fight the demons," replied Momotaro.





"And what you are carrying in your bag?" inquired the pheasant.

"I'm carrying *kibi-tango*, the best in Japan," replied Momotaro.

"Won't you please give me one? I'll be glad to become your helper also," said the pheasant.

The pheasant ate a tasty *kibi-tango* and went along with the dog and the monkey to help Momotaro.

Soon they came to the beach.

"Now someone will have to look for a boat for us," said Momotaro. So the dog and the monkey went to find a fisherman who would lend them one.

"Momotaro-San is going to the Demon Island to fight the demons who trouble everyone. Would you please lend us a good strong boat for him?" asked the dog and the monkey.

"Of course, I'll let you take the best boat I have for Momotaro-San. I'll give you sturdy oars and a fine sail, too," said the fisherman.

Quickly, Momotaro, the dog, the monkey and the pheasant got into the boat. The dog steered it skillfully as the sails fluttered in the gentle ocean breeze. The boat sailed swiftly and steadily towards the Demon Island.

After some time, the Island was visible.

"I can see it...*wang...wang...*" barked the dog.

"I can see it...*kyang...kyang...*" screeched the monkey.

"I can see it...*coo...coo...*" chirped the pheasant.

The demons saw Momotaro's boat from their castle high up in the mountains, and they yelled out to each other, "Look! Look! Some strangers are coming here in a boat. Close the door of the castle at once!"

When Momotaro, the dog, the monkey and the pheasant got down from their boat and climbed up the mountain, they found the huge, heavy door of the demons' castle locked from inside.

"Hear me, demons...hear me. The bravest person in Japan, Momotaro, has come to fight you. Will you stop coming to our Island and attacking our people? Answer me!" shouted Momotaro loudly.

"No, no!" thundered the demons. "Go back, go back!" they yelled.

"I can open the castle door easily," chirped the pheasant to Momotaro. "I can fly right over that high wall." So, flying high, high into the sky, the pheasant flew inside the courtyard of the demons' castle and opened the door from within.

"Let's go! Let's go!" cried Momotaro.

The demons tried to attack him with iron rods, but the dog barked wildly and jumped and ran around among the demons biting them on their arms, legs, hands and all over. The monkey screeched and jumped on the demons' backs, biting and scratching them fiercely.

"*Uwah...uwah...!* I'm hurt. I'm wounded!" yelled the demons, crying in pain, running and trying to hide. The pheasant flew swiftly after them. She scratched and bit the demons on their faces, backs and shoulders with her sharp beak and claws.

Momotaro swished open his sword. He bravely struck the demons left and right as they ran hither and thither. Oh, what a hullabaloo! What fierce fighting there was! The dreadful demons could not face up to the fearful attack of Momotaro and his helpers. Momotaro leaped left and right dodging the demons as he slashed and struck them with his sword.

Finally, the king of the demons was badly wounded and fell to the ground. Momotaro pointed his sword at him and said, "*Sa, sa...*how's that? Will you come again to our village to trouble us?" shouted Momotaro.

The demon king started weeping. He apologised for the trouble and suffering the demons had caused to the villagers. "Please forgive us. From now on, we will never ever disturb you or the villagers again," cried all the demons as they bowed before Momotaro with folded hands.

"I'll forgive you if you promise to become good demons," said Momotaro.

Then and there, the demon king ordered the demons to carry all the old looted treasures out of the castle and put them in Momotaro's boat. They brought out wonderful treasures: precious corals, sparkling jewels, gold, silver, rich brocades, shimmering silks and everything else they had plundered and placed them in the boat. Then Momotaro, the dog, the monkey and the pheasant got into the boat also.

"Now that we have become good demons, please do come and visit us again," requested the king politely as he bowed before Momotaro.

When the boat reached the fisherman's beach Momotaro placed the treasures in a cart. The dog pulled it from the front. The monkey pushed from the back and the pheasant, too, pulled it from the side with a rope. They crossed meadows, fields and mountains. Momotaro and his helpers finally reached home safely.

His parents were delighted to welcome him back.

Then Momotaro called for all the people who had been robbed by the demons and he returned their precious treasures to them.

"*Arigato, arigato....* Thank you, thank you," cried all the villagers. They praised brave Momotaro as they rejoiced and celebrated his safe return from the Demon Island.

Never again were they disturbed by the once-dreadful demons.



Issunboshi—The One Inch Samurai

Long, long ago in a Japanese village called Naniwa, there lived an old couple who had no children. Whenever they went to visit any shrine, they always prayed, "Please give us a child. Even if it is as small as a finger, it will be all right."

After some time, a little boy was born to them but he was indeed tiny...as small as a finger!

"What a sweet, small child he is!" exclaimed the happy parents. They named him Issunboshi and raised him with loving care. The boy grew up strong and healthy but he never got any taller.

One day, he said to his parents, "Please let me go to the city. Even though I am smaller than a dwarf, one day I'll become a famous person. You'll see..."

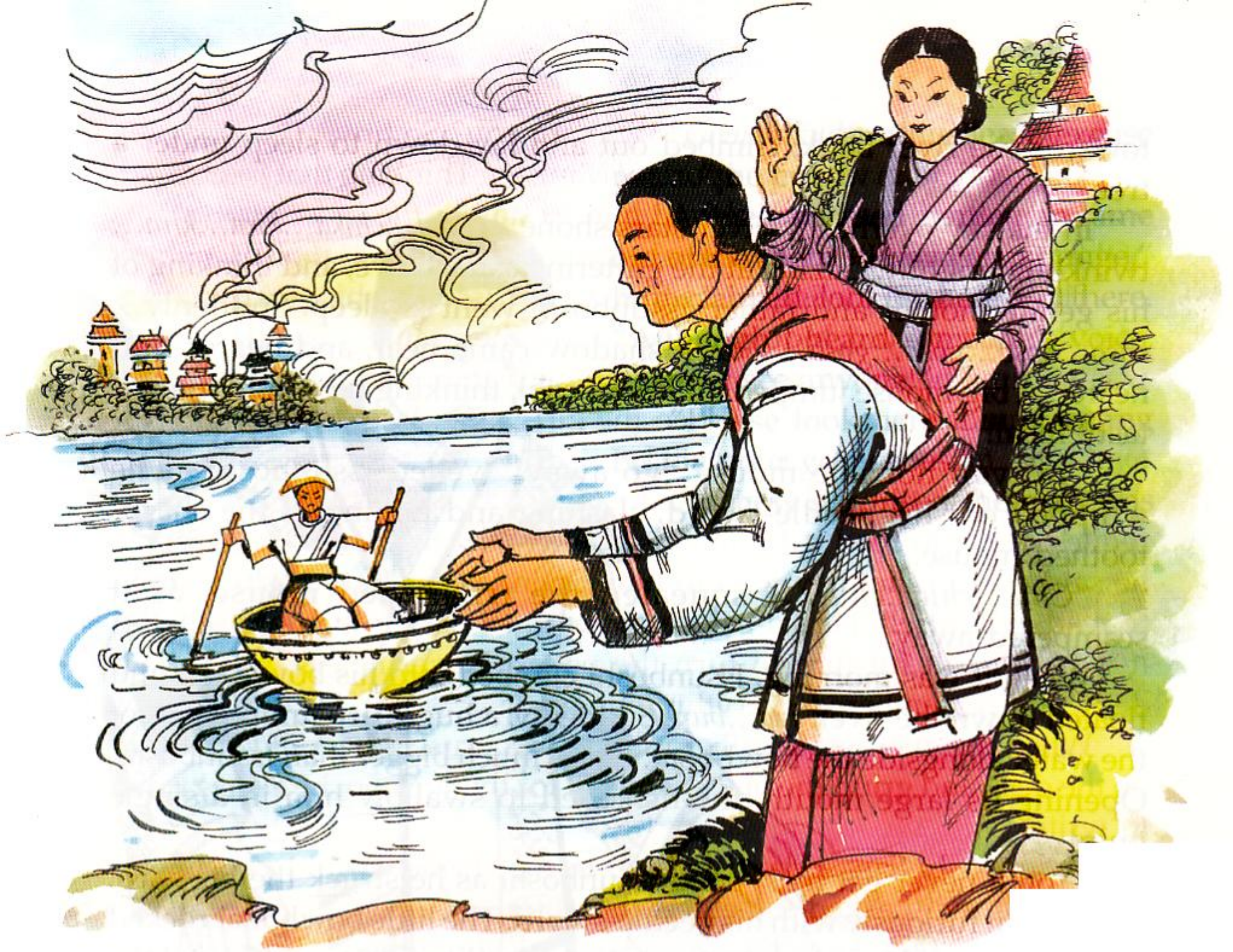
His father gave him permission and said, "I know you are clever and wise. Surely you'll do very well and become famous."

So the father made Issunboshi a sword from a needle and the mother made him a small hat from wheat straw so he could wear it on his journey. Instead of a boat, they got a bowl for him and floated it on the river. They gave him a chopstick for an oar.

Issunboshi hung the needle-sword from his belt, put on his new straw hat and got into his bowl-boat. "Father, Mother... goodbye...I'll return soon." Issunboshi pushed away from the river bank using the chopstick-oar. The bowl-boat floated gently...*yura...yura...*as it moved down the river.

A beautiful butterfly flew overhead...*hira...hira...*and cried, "Oya ma.... What a lovely insect is floating along in a boat!"

"I'm not an insect!" said Issunboshi. "I'm a boy called Issunboshi,



and I'm going to the city to become famous."

The butterfly flew round and round...*hira...hira...* over the bowl-boat and exclaimed, "You seem very wise, Issunboshi-San. When you reach the city, you must work hard and study well. Be careful not to get eaten up by greedy fish or hungry birds."

"*Arigato....* Thank you, Butterfly-San...goodbye," replied Issunboshi as he rowed his bowl-boat along. Cherry trees were gaily blossoming on the river bank where children were playing. When they saw Issunboshi, they yelled, "Look...look! Such a tiny boy is coming along rowing a bowl-boat!" Issunboshi smiled and waved at them. "*Konnichiwa....* Good day...." he said. "I'm going to the city to become a famous person."

The bowl-boat floated on down the river. Suddenly, strong winds started blowing and the bowl-boat tipped dangerously as if it would turn over! When it became dark, Issunboshi rowed his bowl-boat

towards the river bank, climbed out and lay down to sleep under a tree.

In the sky overhead, silver stars shone...*chika...chika...kira...kira...* twinkling brightly. Gazing at the glittering stars above, and thinking of his gentle mother and father, Issunboshi went to sleep. Suddenly... *koso...koso...goso...goso...* a dark shadow came near, and nearer, and nearer. A big mouse jumped on Issunboshi, thinking he would make a tasty meal!

"Ya...you horrible mouse...go away!" yelled Issunboshi as he whipped out his needle-sword, slashing and poking at the sharp-toothed mouse.

"*Chu...chu...chu....*" squealed the frightened mouse, as it scampered away.

When it was morning, Issunboshi climbed into his bowl-boat and floated down the river. *Jya...bun!* Suddenly, a huge carp jumped out of the water alongside the bowl-boat. It was much bigger than Issunboshi. Opening its large mouth, the fish tried to swallow him in a single gulp!

"You'll never get me!" cried Issunboshi as he struck the big carp, attacking it furiously with his needle-sword. The little bowl-boat rocked from side to side and almost overturned. "*Etsu...etsu...etsu....* Take this, take this...." Issunboshi shouted as he slashed and poked at the fish again and again. The frightened carp quickly dived to the bottom of the river.

At last, the bowl-boat reached a place called Tobato. Issunboshi got out and began walking towards the city.

"Oh, what a gay and lively place this is!" he exclaimed when he saw so many people and carriages on the road. Issunboshi walked along slowly and enjoyed the hustle and bustle of the city. He took care that no one stepped on him!

Soon he came to a beautiful mansion. "This must belong to a nobleman," he thought to himself. "I wonder if I could get a job here?" Issunboshi entered the stately gate, climbed up the stairs, walked along the verandah and stopped quietly beside a pair of *geta* shoes.

"Gomen kudasai.... Please excuse me...." he cried.

A finely dressed gentleman came out of the room. "How very strange," he exclaimed, looking here and there. "Although I heard someone's voice, I cannot see anyone!"

"Please look here. I'm standing beside your *geta* shoes."

Oh, how surprised the man was



to see tiny Issunboshi! "Oh, my! Who are you? So tiny...!"

The gentleman was an important Minister. Thinking that Issunboshi was a clever fellow, he employed him to stay in the inner apartments of the mansion and serve his three beautiful daughters as their attendant.

The girls were delighted as they found Issunboshi very amusing. Merrily they played hide-and-seek and other games together. As he was so tiny, he could hide anywhere and then suddenly...*chyoro...chyoro...quickly* run away! When the girls sang, Issunboshi danced...*ton...ton...ton...on top of a small hand-drum.*

Whenever the girls wished to read a book, Issunboshi would request them to read it to him also. "*Arigato...arigato....* Thank you," he said every time they read to him. Soon, clever Issunboshi learned to read by himself. He sat before books much larger than himself and it was difficult for him to turn the pages. Nevertheless, he studied daily and remembered everything he read.

When the girls wrote calligraphy with a brush, he would stand up on the desk and grind the black *sumi* ink for them. Soon, he also learned to write.

"Issunboshi-San, today I will go to the shrine. Would you like to come with me?" asked the eldest daughter.

"Yes, yes. Of course I'll come," he quickly replied. "I will protect you," he said as he walked briskly ahead of the girl. "I am brave and no one can defeat me."

"Issunboshi-San," the girl said, "I've heard that these days evil demons come from the surrounding forests and kidnap people. We have to be very careful."

At last they reached the shrine. After offering prayers, they started to return home. Suddenly someone shouted, "Look! A demon! A demon!" terrified people ran all around trying to escape, but the wicked demon ran after them. The Minister's eldest daughter was too afraid to run. She stumbled and fell, pale and trembling like a leaf when the demon came leaping towards her.

"Help! Help!" she cried, almost fainting with fear. Issunboshi whipped out his needle-sword and boldly faced the demon. "You evil

demon, you'll have to fight me first," he shouted.

The demon couldn't understand where the voice was coming from. Puzzled, he looked all around, here and there, everywhere. At last he saw tiny Issunboshi and roared with laughter. "Ha...ha...ha...ha...! Such a tiny fellow!" he shouted, and snatching him up, swallowed him in a single gulp!

Su...ru...su...ru..., Issunboshi slipped down the demon's throat and straight into his stomach! "I'll never be defeated," thought Issunboshi as he ran round and round inside the demon's stomach.... Slashing, cutting and poking with his needle-sword...*chiku...chiku...chiku...!*

"*U...u...wa...uwa...* It hurts, it hurts!" yelled the demon. "Help! Help!" As the demon stumbled about in agony, Issunboshi climbed right up the demon's throat...poking, slashing and cutting him inside with his needle-sword...*chiku...chiku...chiku...!*

"*U...u...wa...uwa...*" the demon yelped and groaned. And then suddenly, "*Hu...hu...hu...tasu...sho...a...ti...shu...u...!!*" The demon gave a terrific sneeze and out tumbled Issunboshi!

Howling and screeching with pain, the demon ran back into the deep, dark forest. He was in such a hurry that he dropped his magic wishing-rattle. It was a very precious thing, for, if anyone shook it while making any wish, the wish would surely be granted!

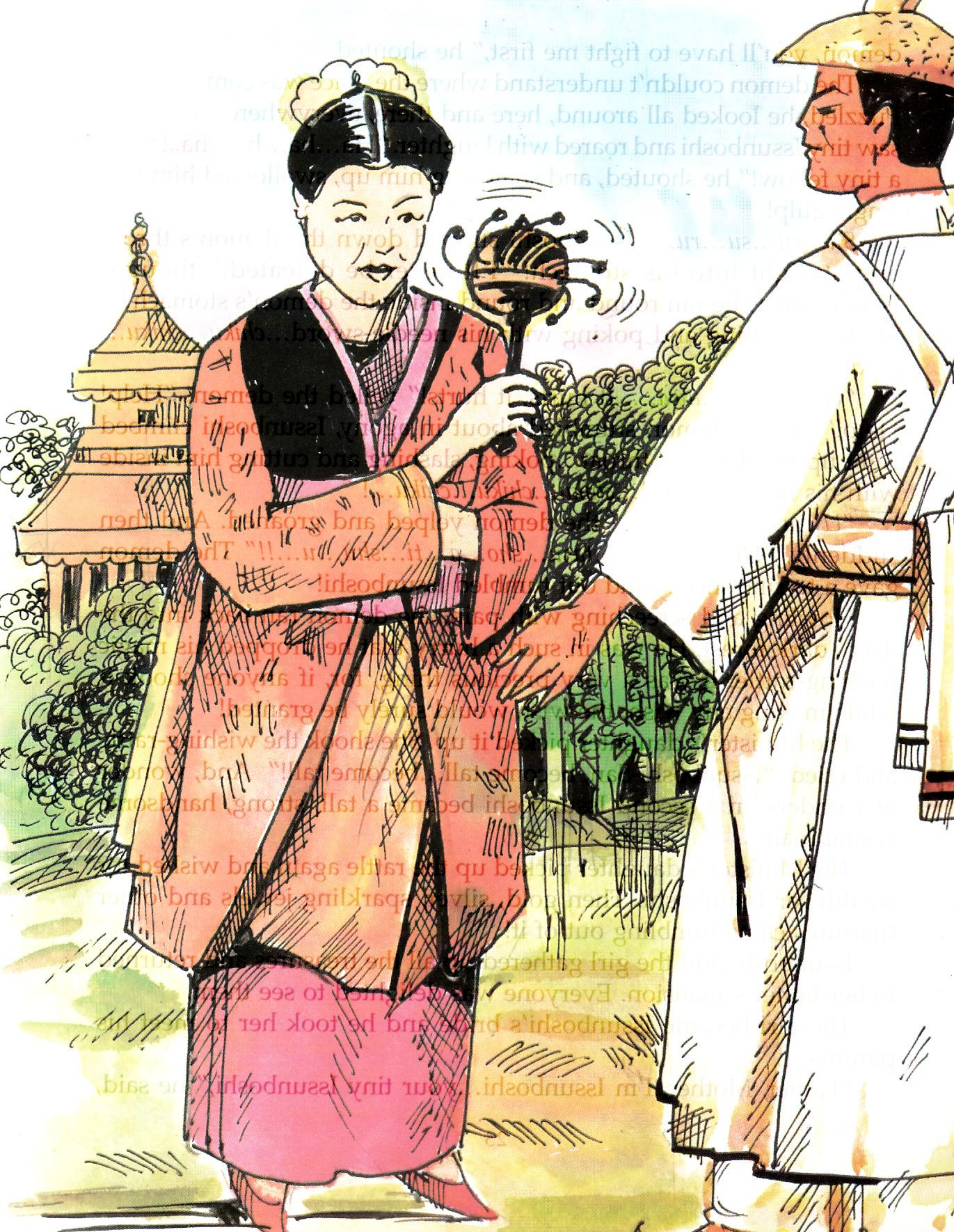
The Minister's daughter picked it up. She shook the wishing-rattle and cried, "Issunboshi-San, become tall...become tall!" And, wonder of wonders, in a second Issunboshi became a tall, strong, handsome young man!

The Minister's daughter picked up the rattle again and wished for wealth for Issunboshi. Then gold, silver, sparkling jewels and other treasures came tumbling out of it!

Issunboshi and the girl gathered up all the treasures and returned to her father's mansion. Everyone was delighted to see them.

The girl became Issunboshi's bride and he took her to meet his parents.

"Father, Mother, I'm Issunboshi...your tiny Issunboshi," he said,



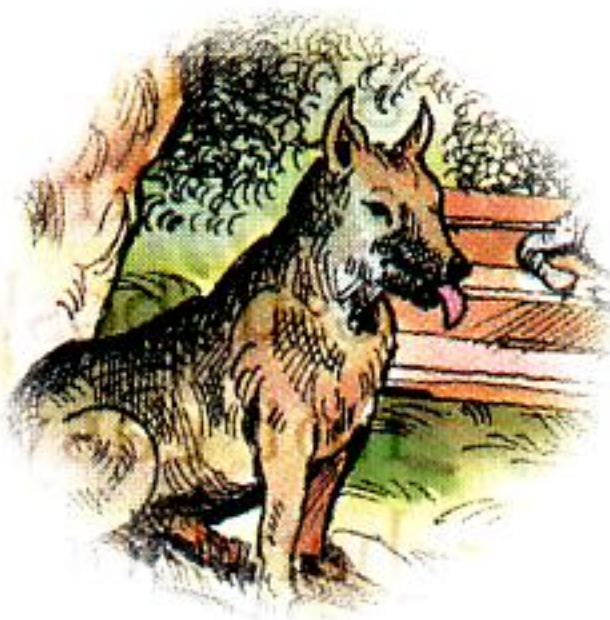


greeting them fondly.

"Are you really our little Issunboshi?" they wondered. It was not easy to believe that this tall, handsome young man was their tiny child. Oh, how amazed and happy they were!

Issunboshi and his bride brought the old couple to the city to live with them at the mansion. Issunboshi worked hard and became a famous Minister. Later, he even became the Lord of the State of *Horigawa*.

Issunboshi, his charming bride and her family and Issunboshi's old parents all lived together, happily ever after.



The Magic Grinding-stone

Long, long ago, there was a very rich merchant who was fond of animals. He had a horse, a dog, a cat, a cock and also a hen.

His luck took a bad turn and suddenly the merchant lost all his wealth. He became so poor that he could hardly buy enough to eat!

One day, he called the horse, the dog, the cat, the cock and the hen and told them tearfully, "Dear friends, I love all of you and wish to look after you always, but I don't have enough money to even buy food for myself. It will make me very sad to see you all hungry. It is better that you go and find good homes elsewhere, where you will have enough to eat and be well cared for."

But the animals did not want to leave their dear master alone.

"*Ko-ku-ko, Ko-ku-ko....* We don't want to go, we don't want to go," said the cock and the cackling hen.

"*Mee-ow, mee-ow....*" added the cat. "Whose legs will I curl my tail around?"

"*Oooo-oof, oooo-oof....* Who will I guard?" wondered the dog?

"*Hin...hin...hin....* Who will ride on my back?" neighed the horse.

However, since their master could not feed them, the unwilling animals just had to leave and look after themselves.

"Good master, kind master," they cried, "for a long time you looked after us so nicely. *Arigato....* Thank you. Take good care of yourself. We are going now. *Sayonara....* Goodbye...."

'Somewhere, there must be a kind person who is fond of animals and will keep us. We will serve him well,' thought the animals.

"I can wake him at dawn," crowed the cock.

"I can give him a fresh egg every day," cackled the hen.

"I can catch all he mice in his house," meowed the cat.
"I can guard his home from robbers," barked the dog.
"I can take him riding on my back, and plough his fields, too,"
neighed the horse.





At last they reached the house of a big farmer.
"Please employ us, sir," they pleaded. "If you will look after us, we will serve you very well."

"I already have so many animals on my farm," replied the farmer. "I'm sorry, but I cannot keep you."

The five friends tried many homes, and got the same answer at every place. The poor, tired animals kept walking slowly...slowly down the country road, looking for a place to live. "It seems there is no one who will help us. We are soooo tired," cried the cock and the hen.

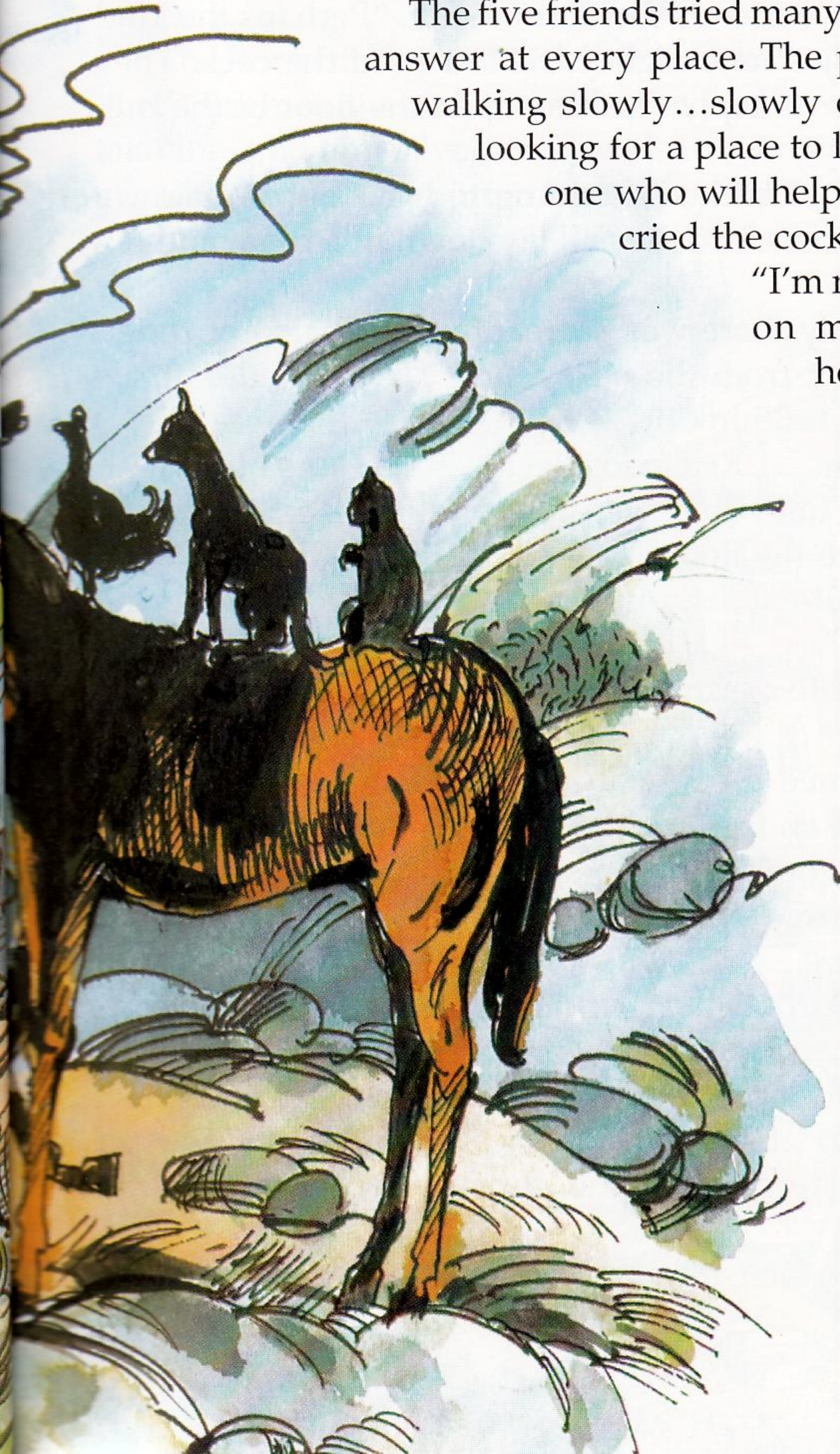
"I'm not tired at all. Come ride on my back," neighed the horse as he plodded along.

After a while, "Meee-ooo, meee-ooo," cried the cat. "Oh, how tired I am, and I haven't eaten even one little fish all day! If we go on like this, I'll become just like a starving alley-cat!"

So the cat also jumped up on the horse's back.

"People here are very selfish. We can't depend on them to look after us. I'm exhausted, too," growled the dog as he also got up on the horse's back.

"Hin...hin...hin....
Cheer up friends," said



the horse. Don't be sad. At least we are all together. Just think that we are going on a sight-seeing trip of our beautiful country...Japan! Surely we will be lucky and happy again soon. Relax. Enjoy riding on my back. I'm glad to be able to help you."

Soon evening came and darkness began to fall. Going down a narrow forest path, the five friends saw a small hut. "Perhaps the kind owner will let us spend just one night here?" crowed the cock. They called out, but there was no reply. Pushing open the door of the hut, they found it to be empty!

"There's no food here," barked the hungry dog, "but at least we can sleep in one of the rooms." So they all lay down in a room and fell asleep.

At midnight, suddenly there was a dreadful hullabaloo of rough and rowdy voices coming from the next room! The startled animals peeped in and what do you think they saw?

Big ferocious demons...! Red and black...green and blue, with flashing eyes and curling tails. They were emptying bags of gold, silver and sparkling jewels onto the floor.

"I'm hungry. Let's all eat!" shouted an ugly demon. "Bring the magic grinding-stone!"

"What will they do with a grinding-stone?" whispered the animals to each other.

Another demon opened a cupboard and took out a small silver grinding-stone. Placing it on the floor, he started to turn it to the right. "Soup come out...soup come out!" he shouted. Large bowls full of fresh, hot *miso* (soup) started pouring out...more than enough for all the demons.

Again, the demon turned the grinding-stone to the right and ordered, "Rice come out...rice come out!" Platters of fresh, steaming hot rice along with chopsticks began flowing out of the grinding-stone.

Then, "Fish come out...fish come out," commanded the demon. Piping hot prawns, lobsters, crabs and shrimp poured out of the grinding-stone.

When they had eaten their fill, the demon said, "Stop! Stop!" He

turned the grinding-stone to the left...and it stopped.

"I wish we could eat some, too," thought the hungry animals.

Their mouths watered at the sight of so much wonderful food coming out of the grinding-stone.

After a little while, all the demons fell asleep. They snored loudly Z...Z...Z...Z...Z....

The horse thought of a clever plan and whispered it to his friends. "Let's frighten these demons and make them run away. Then we can take the gold and silver and jewels.... And also that wonderful magic grinding-stone. Dog, jump up on my back. Cat, jump on dog's back.



Cock, fly up and stand on cat's back. Hen, fly up and stand on the cock's back. Now let's rush into the demons' room crowing, cackling, meowing, barking and neighing...making a dreadful, loud racket. Quick! Quick!"

Ko-ku-ko, ko-ku-ko!

Mee-ow, mee-ow!

Oooo-oo-oooo-oof!

Hin... hin...hin!

What an ear-splitting noise the animals made, as they burst into the room full of sleeping demons!

What a terrible fright the demons got!

"Monster! Monster! It will eat us!" they yelled as they ran out of the hut. They raced away, leaving all their treasures behind.

"How lucky we are!" crowed the cock. "Now we can be comfortable forever!"

"Come," said the horse, "Let's take everything to our dear master. It will be a gift of gratitude from us all, thanking him for looking after us for so many years," he neighed.

"Hai...hai.... Yes...yes," replied the animals happily.

So they took all the treasures and the magic grinding-stone to their old home.

How surprised and happy their master was to see them! "Welcome back. Welcome back, dear friends," he cried as tears of joy ran down his face. "I'm so sorry, though, that I still can not feed you."

"Don't worry, kind master," the animals replied. "You looked after us for a long time. Now we will look after you!"

Then they gave the gold, silver, jewels and the grinding-stone to their delighted master as a gift from them all. They showed him how the grinding-stone worked and then they all sat down to a glorious feast. Oh, how they ate...and ate...and ate!

"*Arigato... arigato....* Thank you...thank you," cried the old master. So once again the master became very rich.

And never, never did he and the five friends ever go hungry again!



The Merry Old Man with a Wart

Long, long ago in a village in Japan there lived an old man who had a large wart, that looked like a ripe peach growing on his right cheek! He looked funny, but he was a cheerful fellow, and never complained. He loved to dance calling the village children every day around him.

"Ya...rah...ya...rah....

E...sa.... E...sa...."

They all sang and danced, clapped and laughed merrily.

One day the old man went to the mountains to cut wood. When he was about to return home, black clouds darkened the sky. The winds howled as lightening flashed across the sky.

Pitter...patter

Pitter...patter

Raindrops began falling quick and fast. "I must get home quickly," muttered the old man.

Rain began falling in torrents, as the wind groaned among the trees.

Za...za...za...za...za....

"I have to find some shelter now," he cried searching here and there, hurriedly.

At last the old man found a big hollow tree and climbed inside. "I'll wait in this cosy place till the storm is over." He murmured.

Soon the rain stopped and night fell. 'I can't go home now. It's better that I spend the night here, and go home in the morning,' he thought closing his eyes.

Suddenly, he heard voices and footsteps of strangers coming nearer and nearer. They were happy voices of laughter and song. But they

also sounded like the swaying of trees, and shrill winds in a storm.

As he peeped out of his hiding place the old man was surprised to see, that these were red, blue, green and yellow demons! They were storm spirits!

The old man shook with fear, and then because he was so cold and wet, 'A...a...tishoo.... A...a...tishoo....'.

He sneezed loudly.

Hearing him storm spirits dragged him out from the hollow of the tree.



"Dance for us," they cried, "dance...dance." Hearing them the old man was very pleased, as he loved to dance.

"Ya...rah...ya...rah...rah....

E...sa.... E...sa...."

The storm spirits clapped their hands, singing lustily. The old man turned round and round, leaping high like a deer, and bending like a flower in the breeze.

"Dance more...dance more," cried the happy spirits cheerfully.

Soon the song of the spirits grew sweet and soft, and the old man began to sway like a tall pine in a gentle breeze. At last the song of the spirits ended, and he sat down to rest. How surprised he was to see that it was already dawn, and the sun was peeping out through the clouds, while he had danced the whole night!

"Wonderful...wonderful!" cried the storm spirits. "Tomorrow you must come and dance for us again. Also, to make sure that you will come, we will take away this 'peach', that grows on your face from you. But don't worry, we'll give it back to you tomorrow."

Then the storm spirits took away his large wart and let him go.

The old man was utterly delighted to have got rid of it!

Running down the mountains, he rushed to his house. Calling his wife, and his friends, he cried laughing, "Look...just look...my large wart has gone!"

Then he told them what had happened in the mountains, and all about the storm spirits.

Every body was happy about the jolly old man. One of the old man's neighbours was another old man, who was about the same age, and he also had a large wart. But it hung on the left side of his face. Hearing the old man's story, he thought that he would also spend a night in the mountains, and get the storm spirits to take his wart away too. So he went up to the mountains, and hid in the hollow of the tree, waiting for the spirits to come.

Soon a storm came, and it was mighty terrible! The rain fell in sheets, the lightening flashed the thunder roared, tearing holes in the sky. The old man was very frightened.

Then the storm spirits arrived, and dragged the man out of the tree hollow. "Dance...dance," they cried. "Dance for us as you did yesterday."

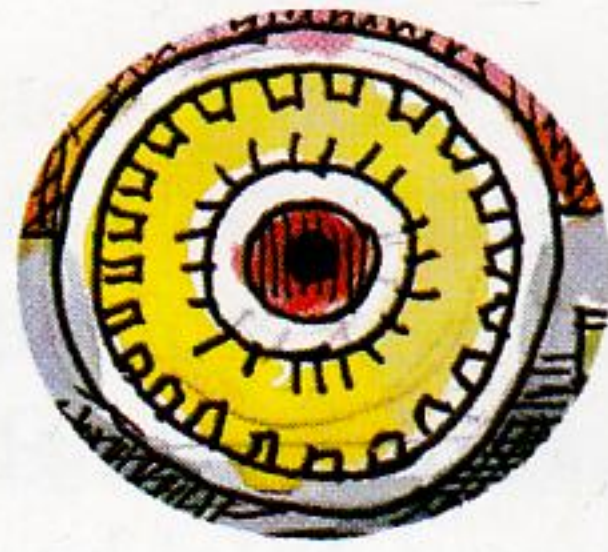
But this old man could not dance. Besides he was trembling with fear, and stood still before the spirits just like a frightened rabbit!

The spirits got annoyed and they said, "If you can't dance, we don't want you here with us. Take your peach, and go home."

So they stuck the first old man's wart on the right side of his face, and let him go.

So now he had to live with two large warts on his face, instead of just one!





The Bride Who Never Ate

Once upon a time a miserly man named Taro lived in a village on a small island far, far from the big city of Tokyo. He made his living by cutting bamboo and making baskets.

One day, as he sat eating his lunch along with some other village men who had gone up a mountain in search of good bamboo, they started talking about the kind of woman each would like to marry.

"How I wish I could find a bride who did not eat!" Taro exclaimed. "Then I will be able to save a lot of money."

"What a stupid thing to say!" cried his friends as they laughed at him. "Everyone...even animals...need food to stay alive. If you think like this, you will never get married."

But Taro was really a terrible miser, so he kept thinking, "If only I could find such a woman, I would get married at once."

A few days later, a sturdy, healthy-looking woman knocked on the door of his house.

"I've heard that you're looking for a wife who doesn't eat. I never eat rice or anything else. So, if you like, you can marry me."

"Oh, is that so? I do want to marry someone who doesn't eat at all," replied Taro happily. He was so delighted to find such a rare person that he married her at once without bothering to find out anything about her home or family.

The woman looked after the house well...cleaning, sweeping, washing clothes and cooking. She even helped Taro to make baskets for sale in the market place.

And, wonder of wonders, she really did not eat! Taro was overjoyed to have such a wife. "Oh, how lucky I am! What a wonderful wife I

have!" he thought.

But as days passed, Taro was amazed to find that all the rice, vegetables and *miso* (soup) were finished. "How strange," thought the miserly Taro, "My wife doesn't eat at all, so how could all the food get finished so quickly? I'm sure a thief has been stealing it!" he muttered uneasily.

He never saw the woman eat anything. She worked hard all day and did everything that was required of her. As time passed, Taro was again puzzled to find that once again all the rice, vegetables and *miso* were finished.

"How on earth can all the food finish so fast when I'm the only one eating?" grumbled Taro. "Surely some thief is robbing and making a fool of me, or my wife is quietly feeding some other people when I'm selling baskets at the market." Taro was determined to find out what was happening.

The next morning he told his wife, "Today I'm going to another market far away to sell my baskets. I shall get back home quite late."

But actually he did not go to any market at all! He walked round to the back of his house, climbed up to the roof of the cowshed by the back stairs and hid himself. From up there he could easily peep into the house and had a very good view of the kitchen.

"What a stupid, miserly fellow!" he heard his wife mutter. "Thank goodness he will be returning late. Now I can have a jolly good time and do as I please."

Taro saw her going to the kitchen and taking out lots of rice. Then she lit the fire in the stove, washed the rice and poured it...*goshi*...*goshi*...*goshi* into the largest vessel in the house and placed it on the crackling fire.

"A-ha!" thought Taro. "So I was right! Now I'll see who all come to eat."

Taro was even more astonished to see the woman make plenty of *miso* soup, pouring it into ten bowls! "*Ara...ara...ya...ya*...what on earth is she doing now?" muttered Taro. "Are so many guests coming?"

When the rice was cooked, the woman made ten...twenty...

thirty...forty *nigiri* (rice balls) and placed them neatly on a very large platter. Then she poured the hot, delicious smelling *miso* soup into ten bowls, arranging them around the platter.

'So now the guests would be coming,' thought Taro hidden on the roof. But the woman suddenly stood up, untied her hair, swirling it all around. 'Ara...goodness, what is she up to now?' wondered Taro. But the very next moment, "Ooh... aah...." he shrieked in horror, almost falling off the roof!

He saw the woman lift up her hair from the top of her head revealing a huge open mouth! She picked up the rice balls one-by-one and dropped them plonk...plonk...plonk into it! Then, taking the steaming bowls of soup one after the other, she poured them...slurp...slurp... slurp...into the same huge opening at the top of her head!



Taro almost fainted away!

"How delicious...*fu...mu...fu...mu....* how wonderful! Today the rice balls were so tasty, the soup was so good. Ah-ha what a feat I've had!" exclaimed the woman, smacking her lips loudly. Then she took the remaining rice balls and dropped them *plonk...plonk...plonk...* into the opening and then *slurp...slurp...* the remaining bowls of soup were poured down. So many, many rice balls and so many, many bowls of soup disappeared in seconds!

Then the woman stood up, combed her hair nicely, winding and pinning it on top of her head. She washed the platter and soup bowls, scrubbed the utensils and swept the kitchen clean. Then she sat down and started to make some baskets.

"*Ara...ara...ma....* Oh God, save me, save me," wailed the terrified Taro trembling *gata...gata...burr...burr...* like a leaf. "She's a witch, a demon in disguise! What a fool I was to search for a wife who did not eat! Now...*ara...ya....* I have a witch in my house! What shall I do now?"

In the evening, he came down by the back stairs and quietly crept into the house, pretending to be extremely tired from the long journey.

"I cannot eat anything now. I'll just go to sleep," he said. "I'm sorry you had such a long journey, but you'll feel better after resting," replied the woman smiling.

Next evening, after dinner, she said, "Come out to the storehouse and see the baskets I made yesterday while you were away. I'm sure you'll be able to sell them for a good price."

Now that Taro knew she was a witch, he was very frightened as he went along with her to the storehouse where all the baskets were kept. The woman stopped before the largest basket and called out to him, "Look, look I made this one yesterday when you had gone to the other market. Just see how big and strong it is. Come here and see it properly," she said.

As Taro came near, she gave him a terrific push from the back and, catching hold of his legs, she tossed him inside the basket!

Swiftly she changed into her true form, growing huge and tall,

black as coal with eyes blazing like fire, swirling hair and sharp teeth like those of a ferocious tiger shining inside her gaping mouth. Two big horns jutted out from her head.

Tossing the big basket with the quaking Taro inside onto one shoulder, she raced up the mountain...*byo...byo...byo...*through deep forests, over rocky paths, swift streams and thorny bushes she jumped and ran, flying like the wind up...up...up.

At last, reaching an enclosure in the forest, she shouted, "Come... come...*o...o...i...i...*! Come quickly! See what a fat, delicious fish I've brought for a feast today!"

"What fish have you got?" hollered all the witches as they came leaping and running. "Is it a man or a woman?"

"It's a man...a man. He's inside the basket. Must be dead with fright already. Ha, ha, he-he-he," laughed the witch-wife.

Just then, from inside the basket on his witch-wife's shoulder, Taro saw a tree branch hanging low overhead and coming down almost into the basket. Quick as a wink, terrified Taro caught hold of the branch. He jumped out of the basket and ran desperately down the mountain.

The witch-wife did not realise what had happened as she raced on to join the other dreadful witches who were all waiting to have a splendid feast. "Here, here is the big fish," she screamed as she flung down the basket. "Come, come, let's eat him!"

But the big basket was empty!!

"So the fish has escaped! But he couldn't have run very far. Quick, quick, we'll chase after him," shouted all the witches.

"Where will you run? Fool!" they thundered. "Where will you hide? We'll eat you up right now." Hordes of hungry witches, grinding their yellow teeth and swirling their hair, with blazing eyes came running closer, closer, closer...thump...thump...thump!

Poor Taro could feel the burning heat of the flames coming out of their mouths and eyes. "I'm surely dead. I'm dead. I'll be caught and eaten!" thought Taro, almost fainting with fright.

Suddenly, he saw a field of wild garlic growing high and thick. "I'll

hide there," he thought. "There's nowhere else to run to." So Taro ran into the garlic field and lay down as if he was really dead.... Almost without breathing.



The shouting pack of witches came nearer and nearer. But as soon as they came to the edge of the garlic field...*pita...su...*they suddenly stopped!

"Stop! Stop! We can't go any further. This is garlic...garlic! If it touches us, we will rot away and die! Oh, what a delicious fish we missed! How terrible! How awful! Let's go back and look for another one." So, yelling and screaming, all the witches raced back up into the mountain forest.

Taro lay quietly in the garlic field all night, thankful that he had been saved. "I never knew that garlic was powerful enough to protect me from witches and demons," he thought.

At dawn, Taro got up and pulled up lots of garlic plants to hang around his waist, to stick in his hair and to carry a large bundle of them on his head. When he got home, he hung them over and around all the doors and windows and from the roof of his house so no witches or evil spirits could ever get inside.

Later, he stopped being miserly and married a nice woman who liked to eat and they both lived happily ever after.

All over the world, including India, garlic is known to have great medicinal properties. In Europe it is still believed to have powers to ward off evil spirits.

Even now in southern Japan on 5 May every year, evil spirits are thought to wander about after sunset. So a Garlic Festival is celebrated by villagers who hang rows of wild garlic over their doors and windows and across roofs so that evil spirits, ghosts and witches cannot enter their homes.



Mountain Pears

Once upon a time, in a small mountain-village, there lived a widow with three sons. Since the children had no father, the mother had to work very hard to bring them up.

One day she got sick. Lying in bed, she spoke in a small, weak voice. "How I wish I could eat some sweet mountain pears! I'm sure they would help me to get well soon."

Her eldest son, Saburo, exclaimed, "Mother, Mother, I'll go up the mountain and get pears for you."

The next morning, Saburo went up the steep mountain road and soon reached a lonely, dense forest. On top of a big rock there sat an old white-haired woman. "Saburo, Saburo, where are you going?" she asked.

"I'm going to get some mountain pears for my sick mother," replied Saburo impatiently.

Nodding her head, the old woman said, "If that is so, then listen to me carefully. If you go straight up on this road it will soon divide into three paths. There you'll see three bamboo trees. They will sway in the wind and sing to you:

"Go, go...*gassa, gassa*

Don't go...*gassa, gassa....*"

You must listen carefully to their song and look carefully at the direction towards which the bamboos are leaning. You must take the path towards which the bamboos are leaning and singing:

"Go, go...*gassa, gassa*

Don't go...*gassa, gassa....*"

"Don't take any other path or you will be in danger," she warned.

"Yes, yes. I know. I know everything," answered Saburo carelessly. He continued to walk on without even listening to the old woman's advice.

As he went along the road, he came to the place where it divided



into three paths. Three bamboo trees stood on each path, swaying in the wind and singing:

"Go, go...*gassa, gassa*

Don't go...*gassa, gassa....*"

Since Saburo had not listened carefully to what the old woman had said he had completely forgotten her warning. So he foolishly took a path where the bamboos were singing:

"Go, go...*gassa, gassa*

Don't go...*gassa, gassa....*"

He thought, "I'll reach the top of the mountain quickly by this path. That old woman doesn't know anything."

As he went, he saw a crow's nest on a tall tree. Poking out their tiny beaks from the nest were some small baby crows. When they saw Saburo, they began cawing softly in their little baby voices:

"Go, go...*gassa, gassa*

Don't go...*gassa, gassa....*"

"Bah! What silly baby crows! They know nothing," mumbled Saburo as he walked on briskly.

Soon he saw a big old tree whose branches spread right over the path. From a branch high overhead, many small bats hung swaying in the breeze and singing:

"Go, go...*gassa, gassa*

Don't go...*gassa, gassa....*"

"Bay! What stupid bats! They know nothing. Soon I'll find the pear tree. Ha, ha, ha...." laughed Saburo as he continued up the path.

At last he reached the shore of a small lake. The sky-blue water rippled gently. A branch of the mountain pear tree growing near the lake stretched over the water. It was full of the most delicious-looking fruit.

"*Ya, ya....* Just look...look at all those wonderful pears! So many of them, too!" exclaimed Saburo excitedly. Although the bamboos the baby crows and the small bats all sang "Don't go...*gassa, gassa*. Don't go...*gassa, gassa*," they were all wrong. Bah! And that old woman, too, thought Saburo. Now I'll climb up and pick plenty of them for

mother.... The juiciest and the best. How delighted she will be, he thought proudly.

Saburo crept along the branch bending low over the lake. As he stretched out his hand to pluck them, Saburo's shadow reflected in the waves below...the waves that crashed, "*d...ron, d...ron, d...ron*" against the shore.

At once, the demon serpent-king of the lake awoke. When he saw Saburo's reflection in the water, he swam up, hurtled himself at Saburo and swallowed him in one gulp!

Meanwhile, in the house, Saburo's mother and his two younger brothers waited anxiously for him to return. When he did not come back, the second boy, Takashi, said, "Mother, Mother... this time I'll go and get the mountain pears for you." He set out climbing the mountain road.

But Takashi, too, did not listen to the old woman and took the same wrong path where the bamboos sang:

"Don't go...*gassa, gassa....*"

and the baby crows cawed:

"Don't go...*gassa, gassa....*"

And the swaying bats sang:

"Don't, go...*gassa, gassa....*"

So Takashi strode on and reached the lake near which the pear tree grew. Climbing up and up the tree, he crawled along the branch spreading out over the lake. The demon serpent-king saw Takashi's reflection in the water. Quickly, he darted up and, coiling himself around the frightened boy, he swallowed Takashi in one gulp!

The worried mother and her youngest son waited every day for Saburo and Takashi to return. When they did not come home, little Shinkichi said, "Mother, Mother... this time I will go to get the mountain pears for you and I will also search for my two brothers."

"No, no! Shinkichi, no! If you, too, don't come back, it will be just terrible for me. I don't want the pears at all now! Please don't go anywhere. Please stay near me," wept the mother.

"Dear Mother, don't worry about me," said Shinkichi. "I'll get lots

of delicious pears for you and I'll bring back my brothers also. Just you wait and see!"

So the next morning, Shinkichi set out eagerly on the mountain road. Soon he came to the place where the old white-haired woman sat on a big rock.

When she saw the boy, she called out, "Shinkichi...Shinkichi, you are too young to go up the mountain alone! Are you also planning to get mountain pears for your sick Mother?" she asked.

"Yes, Grandmother. That's why I am going up the mountain," replied Shinkichi as he bowed politely before her. "I must also search for my two brothers who went up the mountain to get the pears for Mother. They haven't returned yet," he told her.

"They didn't listen to me," said the old woman as she shook her head. "Now you, little Shinkichi, listen to me carefully."

She told him how to know the right path to follow, and then she took out a small, sharp sword and gave it to him. "It's a magic sword," she said. "Use it when you are in danger."

"Thank you, Grandmother," said Shinkichi as he bowed again before the old woman.

Hanging the sword from his waist, he walked fearlessly up the road into the forest. Soon he came to the place where three bamboo trees stood on three different paths, swinging in the wind and singing:

"Go, go...*gassa, gassa*

Don't go...*gassa, gassa....*"

"Ya, ya.... I must not make any mistake here," said Shinkichi to himself. "I must be very careful." So, very carefully he looked at the paths where the bamboos were leaning. And more carefully he listened to what they were singing:

"Go, go...*gassa, gassa*

Go, go...*gassa, gassa....*"

Sang one of the sets of bamboos, just as the old woman had said.

So Shinkichi walked along steadily and soon came to the tall tree where a family of crows had their nest. Little baby crows peeped out at Shinkichi and cawed softly:

"Go, go...*gassa, gassa*

Go, go...*gassa, gassa....*"

"Oh, you sweet little birds! Thank you for helping me," said Shinkichi as he waved to them.

Soon Shinkichi came to the big tree that spread a branch high over the path...a branch with many small bats hanging from it and singing:

"Go, go...*gassa, gassa*

Go, go...*gassa, gassa....*"

"*Arigato*...thank you, little bats for helping me," cried Shinkichi cheerfully.

He continued climbing up the mountain path and suddenly he saw a beautiful red bowl floating...*sun...puku...kan...sun...puku...* down a sparkling mountain stream. Shinkichi stepped into its cool waters, picked up the bowl and put it in his bag.

At last, he reached the shore of the small lake. Its rippling waves glimmered and crashed *d...ron...d...ron...d...ron* on the shore where the mountain pear tree stood with one branch full of fruit reaching out over the waters of the lake.

Suddenly, the leaves of the tree began singing softly:

"Don't climb up from the eastern side.

Don't climb up from the western side.

Don't climb up from the northern side.

Don't climb up from the southern side."

"*Arigato*...thank you beautiful tree, for helping me," cried Shinkichi happily. "I will climb only from the southern side," he thought to himself.

Quickly he clambered up the tree and gathered the largest, sweetest pears for his mother. "How wonderful..." he cried as he started climbing down. But, in his hurry, he stepped on the branch that was spreading out over the lake on the western side.

When the demon serpent-king saw Shinkichi's shadow on the water, he leaped up high from the lake and hurtled himself at Shinkichi, planning to swallow him in one gulp.

But brave Shinkichi whipped out the magic sword the old woman

had given him and slashed...*etsu...etsu...etsu...etsu...*...the demon serpent-king with all his strength.

The wounded serpent crawled up to the shore, trying to hide among the rocks, but Shinkichi plunged the sword swiftly into it again and again until the twitching, jerking demon serpent fell down dead.

Then "*Ho...i...hoi...Shinkichi...ya...ya...*" there came a soft voice. "*Ho...i...hoi...Shinkichi...ya...ya...*" the voice came again!



Startled, Shinkichi looked here and there and all around, but there was no one to be seen! Then he noticed that something in the belly of the demon serpent was moving...*hiku...hiku...hiku....* At once, Shinkichi whipped out his sword and ripped the serpent's belly open.

Out crawled his two brothers...trembling, pale and very, very frightened!

"Saburo! Takashi! You're safe...you're safe. Don't be afraid now. The demon serpent king is dead!" yelled Shinkichi.

Shinkichi took the red bowl out of his bag and filled it with the fresh water of the lake. He gave it to his brothers to drink. When the boys understood how little Shinkichi had saved them, they hugged him and laughed aloud, "*Arigato, arigato, arigato*, little brother. You are the cleverest one of us all!" they cried.

Then Saburo, Takashi and Shinkichi carried lots and lots of pears down the mountain for their mother. "*Ho...ra...ho...ra*, Mother, we are home! Look, look...what a lot of delicious pears we've brought for you," they cried joyfully as they laid them down before her.

"*Arigato, arigato, arigato....* Thank you, children...especially my clever little Shinkichi," said the overjoyed mother. "I am so happy to see you all here with me." Then she *ate... ate... ate...* the sweet, delicious pears. Soon she became well and strong and they all lived happily ever after in their little house in the small mountain village.



The Cloud-Demon

In a small village at the foot of some hills in Japan, there lived a strong and young woodcutter named Yaroku. He earned his living by cutting wood in the mountains and selling it at the village market.

One day a friend of his went to mountains as usual, but never returned home. A few days later, another woodcutter also did not come back. A few villagers went to the mountains to look for them, but they couldn't find anyone.

"*Koriya...koriya...* how strange! Where could they have gone?" Cried the worried villagers. "Maybe wild animals ate them. There are evil ghosts and wicked spirits in the mountains, too! Oh dear! What could have happened to them?"

Yaroku said, "Please don't worry and don't be afraid. I'll go to the mountain tomorrow and search for them."

Yaroku set out early the next morning. He climbed up a narrow mountain path that wound through the dense forest. On and on he walked till he came to the bank of a river. It flowed into a deep lake whose dark blue waters crashed "*d...ron, d...ron...*" against its rocky shore. A tall tree grew nearby. Its branches, shaggy and thick with leaves, stretched out over the waters of the lake.



"Ara...arama.... How hungry I am!" murmured Yaroku. "I'll rest here for a while and eat." Sitting under the tree, he took out his lunch box and began to munch a rice-ball.

Suddenly, the sky was heavy with clouds. It became dark and gloomy. There was no breeze, but the leaves of the tree began to tremble "za...wa, za...wa." Then a bright golden cloud appeared. It floated along, dangling a long golden thread that swayed back and forth as it came nearer and nearer. "Oh, how beautiful!" exclaimed Yaroku.

As he stared at the cloud, a glittering silver thread came dangling down...then a red one, a blue one and then a green one. Then



shimmering pink and purple threads came down from the shining cloud. Hundreds of glimmering threads in all the colours of the rainbow. Longer and longer and they came closer and closer to Yaroku. He was fascinated by their brilliant hues and wonderful sparkling colours.

Before Yaroku could realise what was happening, the threads floated right over him and coiled themselves slowly around his body, tight... and tighter.

"Go away...go away!" yelled Yaroku. Panic-stricken, he flung away the half-eaten rice-ball as he wriggled and pulled and pushed and tore away in fright the colourful, sticky threads that entangled him. "Oi...oil...a demon...a cloud-demon!" he screamed. The more he struggled and fought to free himself, the more tightly the sticky threads coiled themselves around his neck and legs and body like the tentacles of an octopus!

"Now I know what happened to my friends. This cloud-demon must have devoured both of them. Now he'll eat me, too!" thought Yaroku as he shook with fear.

The demon blinked at him *gikow...gikow...* as it opened and closed its flaming eyes. Its sharp black teeth were bared in a hideous grin and two huge, scaly elephant-like ears flapped hideously on either side. Gold, silver and multicoloured dropped down endlessly. Yaroku twisted and kicked as he struggled to free himself from the sticky threads. He felt like an insect trapped in a spider's web.

In a sudden burst of strength, he pulled out the axe tucked in his belt and slashed all around...*etsu...etsu...etsu...* at the binding threads. "Let go...let go...you demon!" he shrieked.

The cloud-demon, now cut and tattered, rose up floating high and trying to hide among the thick leafy branches of the tree. Feeling the sticky threads loosening, Yaroku kept slashing with his axe...again, yet again...desperately. At last he jerked himself free and ran like the wind towards his village.

Frightened to death, breathless and exhausted, he told the villagers all that had happened. "How terrible...how dreadful!" they cried. "What a fearful cloud-demon! How can we go to the mountains again

to cut wood? Oh, how shall we live? What shall we eat?"

Then all the village elders gathered around Yaroku and bowed to him with folded hands. "In this entire village, you are the only one who has seen and fought with the cloud-demon. We beg you to kill it and save us all."

Yaroku had recently married a sweet young maiden. "Suppose I do not return? What will happen to my wife? What will happen to my old parents?" he thought. It was so hard to decide what to do. "But the lives of the whole village are more important, than just mine," he thought.

Finally, Yaroku said, "I'll try my best to get rid of the cloud-demon, but I need a little time." Then he went to the temple of the mountain God. He fasted for seven days and seven nights. "Please give me strength and determination, oh God, so that I can kill the demon and save my people," he prayed.

On the night of the seventh day, there came the voice of the God of the Mountain. It rang as clear as a bell. "Yaroku, your prayers have been heard. Your prayer will be granted, but it might cost you your life. I'll help you, but it will be very hard. The cloud-demon is powerful. Are you ready for a long, hard fight? Decide. Are you truly ready?"

Yaroku thought of his old parents and young wife who might be left without him, and tears flowed down his face. "God of the Mountain," he cried, "this is too hard for me to decide! But for the sake of my village I am ready to fight the cloud-demon to death. Help me...give me strength...protect me...." he prayed.

At once, an ear-splitting clap of thunder shook the mountains and fierce lightning flashed across the sky.

Yaroku shut his eyes. When he opened them, he found he had been turned into a gigantic frog.

It was a clear moonlit night. Yaroku, the frog, started crawling up the mountain. Slowly he went on and on till he reached the shore of the lake. It was calm and still all around. A full moon shone in the sky, making the rippling waters of the lake shimmer and shine. The trees and birds were fast asleep in the quiet night.

Then the golden cloud-demon came floating across the sky, touching the tops of the trees and coming down... down. In an instant, twenty, thirty, hundreds of gold, silver, red, blue, orange and green threads came dangling, swaying down over the huge hard-skinned frog-Yaroku. Yaroku stretched out strong hands and feet to tear apart the sticky threads that were curling and coiling around him.

The furious cloud-demon opened its fiery red mouth, showing its black, poisonous teeth. It hurtled itself upon Yaroku-the-frog in order



to crush and devour him. But Yaroku pounced upon the demon and hurled it down to the ground. Oh, what a bitter fight it was as they rolled over the over! When the demon was on top, it tried to strangle the enormous frog with its many sticky threads. When the frog was on top, it stamped and kicked out at the powerful demon. They hit out at each other till sparks flew! What a fearful fight it was taking hours and hours!

At last, Yaroku-the-frog was utterly exhausted. In spite of fighting with all his strength, the cloud-demon had bound him with millions of brilliant threads and he couldn't move at all!

"I'm surely defeated...and dead now," thought the brave frog. Then the air around the mountain came alive with powerful voices echoing from afar:

"Ya...ro...ku... Ya...ro...ku...
Ya...ro...ku...
Ya...ro...ku... Ya...ro...ku...
Ya...ro...ku..."

All the villagers ...men, women, children... carrying flaming pine torches, were marching together up to the lake.

"Ya...ro...ku... Ya...ro...ku...
Ya...ro...ku..."

Nearer they came and nearer.

"All my villagers, my friends are with me. I must help them with my last breath," thought Yaroku-the-frog. Hearing their encouraging voices, Yaroku felt renewed strength and spirit.



With all of his might, he lunged once more at the cloud-demon and tore to bits the sticky threads that were binding him!

Just then...gon...gon...gon...a tremendous waterfall filled the entire sky. Swirling cascades of water thundered down hitting the cloud-demon hard, destroying all its sticky threads and sweeping it out into the deep waters of the lake.

"Ah...oh...God of the Mountain, thank you for helping me," cried Yaroku-the-frog as he jumped into the lake after the demon.

"I'll kill you...finish you...horrible demon," he cried. Opening his huge mouth ever wide...wide, Yaroku-the-frog swallowed the cloud-demon in a single gulp! The dreadful fight was over at last and a pale rosy dawn began to peep over the tops of the mountains.

"Everyone...all my village friends...be happy...you are safe now. The dreadful demon is dead!" shouted Yaroku to the villagers as they came closer and closer.

But suddenly he felt his voice getting weaker and weaker. He felt like he was choking...couldn't speak...couldn't breathe! He crawled out of the lake and lay helpless on the shore. Again, waterfall filled the sky and sent gentle showers upon him, but it was of no use!

Yaroku lay on the shore like a rock. The poison of the cloud-demon he had swallowed had turned him into stone!

When all the villagers arrived, they were shocked to see a huge stone frog with Yaroku's face!

"He sacrificed his life for us all, so that we may live safely," they sobbed. Tears of sorrow flowed down their cheeks. "*Arigato... arigato...* thank you, thank you, Yaroku. There will never be another courageous man like you. May the God of the Mountains bless and receive you within himself," they prayed. "We promise to look after your parents and your wife."

Since then, every year, a special thanks giving ceremony is held on the anniversary of that day. The villagers assemble on the shore of the lake to offer flowers and light incense and candles to the Mountains God and to Yaroku, the giant stone frog.



The Dragon King's Daughter

Long, long ago in a small island in Japan there lived a young man called Jiro. He lived with his mother in a very small hut. He had no farmland and earned a poor living by picking wild flowers in the mountains and selling them in the village market.

One evening, as he was returning home with lots of flowers that he had not been able to sell, he stopped near the beach. "I'll offer these lovely flowers to the Dragon King," he thought.

"Oh, mighty Dragon King," Jiro called out as he scattered the flowers over the sea, "please accept these flowers as a small gift from me."

At once, the waves rose high, foaming and frothing and sucking the flowers into a whirlpool, deep, deep down into the ocean! Suddenly, a big turtle poked its head out of the waves and swam towards Jiro.

"The Dragon King is very happy to receive your beautiful flowers and sent me to invite you to the Dragon Palace," said turtle. Jiro got up on its back and was carried down, down to the Dragon Palace at the bottom of the sea.

As they got near the palace, the turtle told Jiro, "If the Dragon King offers to give you any gift, ask for his daughter's hand in marriage.

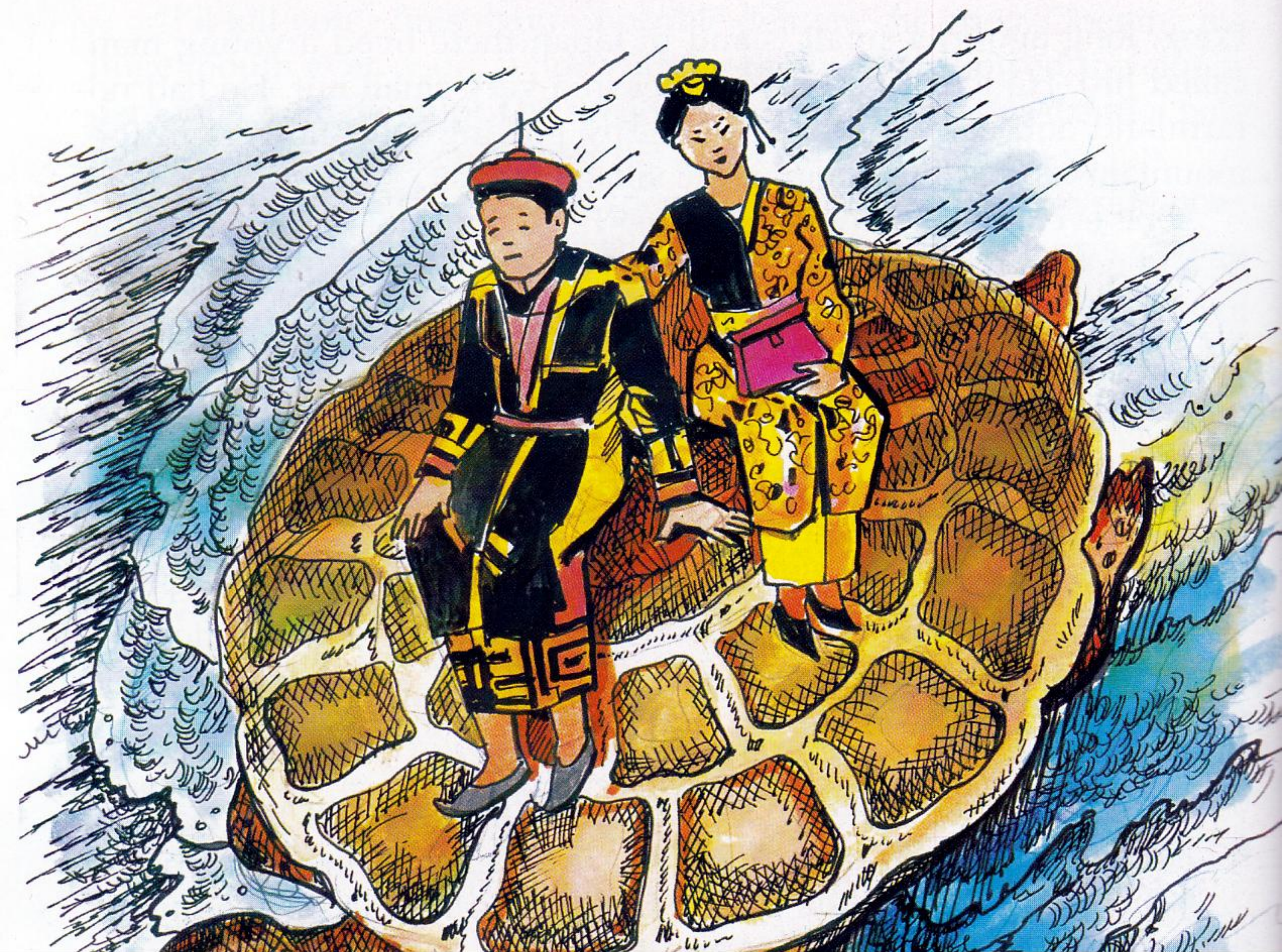
When they reached the palace, the Dragon King was standing at the entrance to welcome Jiro. "*Arigato, arigato...*thank you, thank you for the lovely flowers you sent. Now come and dine with me."

Oh, what a splendid feast was laid out before Jiro! There was sparkling honey-coloured *sake* (wine), fresh white rice, roasted turtle eggs and slices of silvery *sashimi* (raw fish). After dinner, the dragon King's pretty daughter sang and played the *koto* (a stringed instrument)

to entertain Jiro.

For Jiro, the following two days were like a wonderful dream. He had never felt so happy before. Suddenly though, on the third day Jiro remembered his old mother at home.

"I'm so thankful to you," Jiro said to the Dragon King, "that I have been so graciously entertained here. But I have to return home as my Mother must be very worried about me."



"I would like to give you a farewell gift," said the Dragon King. "Tell me, what would you like you have?"

"Would you please give me your charming daughter as my bride?" requested Jiro, bowing low before the King. The Dragon King gladly consented to Jiro's request and so the turtle took Jiro and his bride up to the sea shore.

When Jiro reached home, he was surprised to find that the three days he had spent at the Dragon Palace had really been very, very much longer.

During Jiro's absence, there was no money to buy food. His poor, worried mother became ill and died. Jiro found her lying on the ground like a stone in front of their hut.

"Mother...Mother...." cried the miserable Jiro as tears ran down his face. "I have been a bad son to have left you alone and caused your death. Had I been here, you would still be alive. It's all my fault!" sobbed Jiro.

"Please don't be so said," said his bride. "I can help you. I have brought a magic rod that my father gave me. It is the Rod of Life and is very precious," she explained. "I will use it now...just wait and watch.

She brought some sea-water and sprinkled it all over Jiro's mother. Then, taking the magic Rod of Life, she gently patted the old woman from head to toe. Jiro's mother's head moved, she groaned softly and began to breathe faintly. Jiro's bride sprinkled sea-water over her again and patted her body gently three times.

How happy Jiro was when his dear mother sat up! "*Arigato... arigato!* Thank you...thank you," Jiro joyfully said to his bride.

Then he told his mother all about the Dragon Palace and how he got his charming bride.

As there were now three people in the family, there was not enough room in Jiro's small old hut. "I have brought another marvelous gift from my father, the Dragon King," said Jiro's wife. "It is *uchinokobuchi*... a very precious magic rattle. If you make any wish thrice and shake it, your wish is sure to come true. Watch me," she said with a smile.

"House come out...house come out...house come out," she cried and then she shook the *uchinokobuchi*. At once, a magnificent mansion came out of the rattle!

"Granary come out...granary come out...granary come out," she cried as she shook the rattle again. Lo and behold, a huge granary came out by the side of the mansion!

"Rice come out...rice come out...rice come out," she cried as she shook the rattle again. Huge straw bags full of the finest rice overflowed the granary!

Jiro and his mother were too happy and surprised to speak! Now Jiro and his wife and his old mother could live happily and comfortably.

Alas! The news of Jiro's splendid mansion and his beautiful bride spread throughout the land and finally reached the ears of the wicked feudal lord. He was determined to get the lovely princess away from Jiro and make her his own life. So, just to trouble Jiro, he ordered him to come to his castle.

"Tomorrow, before sunset, you must give me ten thousand sacks of the finest rice. If you fail to do so, you will have to give me your wife! Do you hear?"

Jiro was shocked and miserable. He returned home silent and depressed. "What has happened to make you so quiet and so sad?" asked his wife. "Tell me, what did the lord say to you?"

When Jiro told her, she replied, "*Oya*...oh, is that all? Please don't worry about it. I'll manage everything, but you must sleep now. You look very tired."

Jiro went to bed. At midnight, his wife quietly got up, took a bath and put on a clean *kimono*. She went out to the beach, stood and prayed, and then clapped her hands three times.

Suddenly hundreds of horses came out from the ocean carrying thousands of sacks of the best rice! They trotted in a line towards the spacious garden of Jiro's mansion. They tossed down the rice sacks, returned to the beach and went back into the sea.

Oh, how happy and relieved Jiro was to see so many sacks of rice lying in his garden! When dawn broke, he sent a messenger to the

lord's castle. "I have arranged for ten thousand sacks of the finest rice. Please send your servants to collect them."

"This is impossible!" Said the servants of the lord. But when they came, have were astonished to see ten thousand sacks of rice piled up neatly in Jiro's garden.

After some time, the evil lord again ordered Jiro to come to his castle. "By tomorrow morning you must get me tent house and bales of the finest silk in Japan. If you fail to do so, you must give me your wife," ordered the feudal lord.

When Jiro returned home, his wife asked, "What does the lord want now?"

"He wants ten thousand bales of the best silk in Japan. If I cannot give them, he will take you away," whispered Jiro, almost weeping.

"Oya...oh, is that all?" replied his wife. "Please don't worry. Leave it to me to manage. But you must sleep now."



At midnight, she took a bath, dressed in a clean *kimono*, and went out to the beach. She prayed and then clapped her hands thrice.

Immediately, hundreds of cows carrying bales of the finest silk came walking out of the sea! Slowly, they walked in a line to the mansion's garden and unloaded the bales of silk. Then they quietly returned and went back into the ocean.

How happy Jiro was to see the shimmering bales of silk! At once he sent a messenger to the feudal lord requesting him to have the silk collected.

"How can it be possible?" exclaimed the servants of the lord. They were amazed to see the gleaming bales of silk. And the feudal lord was furious!

Soon, he sent another messenger to Jiro. "On New Year's Day, I will come to your mansion with 999 *samurai*...warriors for a grand feast. Make arrangements for 707 barrels of the very best *sake*...wine, and delicious food...and attend on me personally."

Iyo...Iyo... soon, it was New Year's Day. The feudal lord deliberately dressed like one of the lowliest of his servants and made a servant wear his own gorgeous robes. "If I do this," the lord told the servant, "Jiro will think that you are me. He will compliment you and greet you ceremoniously. When he does that, I will stand up and declare that I am the lord. I will accuse him of offending and insulting me by not welcoming me properly. Then I will punish him and take his wife away!"

So the wicked lord, looking like the lowliest of servants, took his place right at the back of the procession going to Jiro's mansion. When he got there, he sat quietly in a corner with the other servants.

Jiro's wife peeped out from behind the door and saw all the guests seated in their large and beautiful main room. Suddenly, she shook her head with surprise and whispered something to Jiro who was standing behind her.

Then, after rolling up her *kimono* sleeves, she promptly arranged to have trays of delicious food placed in front of every guest. Before they began eating, though, she entered the room and announced,

"Welcome to all of our honoured guests. Please do wait a little," she requested sweetly. Then, going to the corner, where the feudal lord was seated, she bowed low before him. She took him by the hand respectfully and led him to the seat of honour. "*Tonosama*...we greet you as our most exalted guest and are honoured that you have come to our humble home," she said bowing again before him and smiling as she welcomed him graciously.

The lord and all his *samurai* were entertained with plenty of food and wine, and he could not find fault or anything to complain about his generous host in any way. "Well," said the lord, "now I want to see some dancing!"



"Yes, of course," replied Jiro's wife. "We will show you some splendid dancing." She went inside and brought out a small box. She opened the lid and out came lovely dancers dressed in magnificent costumes and glittering jewellery! *Shyam...shyam...* they moved... swaying, dipping gracefully, clapping and dancing in perfect rhythm, bending and circling around. It was beautiful beyond words!

"Enough! Enough! Exclaimed the feudal lord. "Now I wish to see a performance by small dwarfs."

Jiro's wife sat up abruptly. "Most respected lord, a performance by dwarfs can be extremely dangerous. You all are our honoured guests. I cannot put your lives in danger," she said as if she was afraid.

"I am the lord. I will not be refused by anyone!" He cried arrogantly, fuming with anger.

"No, no...I cannot put your lives in danger. Please pardon me," Jiro's wife said tearfully.

"As your lord, I order you to send for dwarfs for our entertainment at once," he shouted. "If you disobey me, I will have you and your husband dragged to jail. Your heads will be chopped off! Do you hear? Bring out those performers!" thundered the lord, his face red with fury.

"All right, all right...then see *this* performance," Jiro's wife replied as she brought out another box much smaller than the first one.

As she opened the lid, an endless army of tiny dwarf *samurais*... warriors wearing their traditional helmets and flashing swords poured out from the box. Jumping, rushing, waving their swords, they attacked the feudal lord and his soldiers... slashing and cutting them. Oh, what fierce fighting there was!

"No...no...! What are you doing? You insolent creatures! Stop... stop!" screamed the terrified feudal lord. He trembled like a leaf as his soldiers ran helter-skelter. They jerked out their own swords, too, but the fantastic dwarf-*samurai* were so very tiny that they could leap and jump on to the shoulders and backs of the lord's soldiers and easily run in between them. The dwarfs poked at their eyes, chopped their ears and noses, and slashed...*etsu...etsu...etsu...* at the arms and

legs of the feudal lord and his warriors.

"Run! Run!" yelled the lord's terrified soldiers as they rushed about in helpless confusion, pushing, shoving and trying to escape from Jiro's mansion. Suddenly, a mighty river gushed out of the little box. It engulfed all the fleeing warriors and their wicked lord, sweeping them all down, down into the sea and drowning them!

Jiro, his mother and his wonderful wife lived happily and peacefully ever after.



Tojo and the Mountain Witch

Tojo was an old man who lived in a small mountain village on one of Japan's northern islands. He made a living by carting people's baggage in his cow-pulled cart. He walked with it from the village to the town and back several times every day.

One afternoon, he bought a basketful of fresh fish from a village



fisherman. He planned to sell them in the town. "I'll make lots of money this evening," he thought happily. He tied the basket to his cart and set off for the town whistling a merry tune.

As Tojo walked up the mountain road it suddenly became very dark. He felt afraid. "*Shu... shu...shu*," he shouted as he hit the cow lightly urging it to go faster but the cow continued to plod along slowly.

Suddenly, a strong, blustery wind blew over the mountain. Then a voice called loudly from behind, "I smell fish...I smell fish!"

"Oh...oh dear...terrible, terrible!" cried Tojo as he turned around and saw a huge, ugly mountain witch! Her mouth stretched from ear to ear, her eyes blazed like coals and her long, black hair swirled round and round like a gigantic thundercloud. Tojo almost fainted.

"Ooo...ooooo, you miserable old man, give me a fish at once," yelled the witch, "or I'll eat you up!"

Shaking with fear, Tojo; pulled out a fish from the basket and flung it at the mountain witch. Prodding his slow cow and whacking her to go faster, he began to run.

The witch gulped down the whole fish in the twinkling of an eye. "Give me another fish," she demanded, "or I'll eat you up!"

Trembling with fear, Tojo pulled out another fish from the basket and threw it to the witch as he shoved the cow to hurry up.

The witch gobbled it down and said, "Delicious...delicious!" smacking her big lips. "Now you miserable fool, give me one more...or I'll cat you up," she threatened.

So once again, poor frightened Tojo pulled out a fish and tossed it to her. Then another and yet another. Finally, the fearsome mountain witch ate up all the fish in Tojo's basket.

"Ooo...ooooo," she screamed, "Come on...give me one more fish...quickly, or I'll eat you up!"

Poor old Tojo began to cry. "There's nothing left," he whimpered. "You've eaten all of my fish!"

"Then give me the cow...or I'll eat you up," screeched the witch.

Tojo thought, "If she eats my cow, how will I make a living?" So, trying to be brave, he said "No, no...I can't give you my cow."

"Then I'll eat you up!" she thundered.

"Agggghhhhh!" screamed Tojo. Frightened to death, he flung down the rope holding the cow and ran for his life. Tojo ran on and on like the wind. He came to a small hut at the foot of a hill. "Thank God! I'm saved," he thought. He knocked loudly on the door and cried, "Save me! Please let me stay here just one night."

But there was no answer. He pushed the door open and saw that the hut was empty. There was firewood in the fireplace and an enormous kettle stood on the stack of wood. "I'm sure, somebody lives here," he thought.

Then he heard heavy footsteps outside, coming closer and closer. "Ooo...eeeeee! What a fine feast I had!" boomed a voice. "Such tasty fish...and a delicious fat cow, too! That wretched old man ran away, though. Never mind... I'll catch him soon enough!"

"Oh how dreadful! I've come to the hut of the mountain witch!" thought Tojo. "Now she'll surely eat me up! Where can I hide? Where can I hide?" frantically, he climbed a wooden post up to the roof. Squeezing himself tightly, he sat quietly huddled in between the rafters.

"Yare...yare.... Now I'll have another feast. Ha, ha! I'll bake some rice cakes," laughed the witch as she stomped into her hut.

Placing the rice cakes over the fire to bake, she sat down near the fireplace to rest. Soon, feeling nice and warm she dozed off.

As the rice cakes frizzled and swelled, their lovely scent drifted up to the ceiling. Tojo, crouching up in the rafters, suddenly felt very hungry. He broke a long, firm bamboo stick from the roof and let it down...down...ever so slowly and carefully over the baking pan, where the rice cakes were sizzling. Very carefully poking a hot rice cake with the bamboo stick, he drew it up...up...slowly...and ate it.

"I've never eaten a tastier rice cake in my life." Tojo thought. So he quietly let the bamboo stick down again and poked it into the second rice cake, then the third...and the fourth...till he had eaten them all!

Suddenly the witch woke up and found that all the rice cakes were gone. "Ya...ya...yare.... Who has eaten all my rice cakes?" she shouted.



"The God of Fire...the God of Fire..." whispered Tojo very softly.

"Well, if the God of Fire has eaten them, it's all right," the witch mumbled. "I'll just make a pot of nice green tea for myself," she thought.

As the tea brewed, the witch dozed off again....z...zz...zzz...zzzz...ZZZZZ. The tempting scent of the fresh hot tea drifted all over the room and up, up to the ceiling.

"How I wish I could drink some of that tea," thought Tojo. "I'm so thirsty after eating all those rice cakes." Seeing the witch sleep, he broke off a thin, hollow bamboo stick from his hiding place on the roof. Slowly, slowly, he let it down...down into the pot of tea. "Su...su...su...." softly he began sipping the tea through the hollow bamboo stick till he had drunk it all!

Suddenly the witch woke up and found her teapot empty. "Ya...ya..yare...who drank all my tea?" she roared.

"The God of Air, the God of Air," whispered Tojo very softly.

"Well, if it was the God of Air, it's all right," muttered the witch. "Now I might as well go to sleep. But where shall I sleep tonight?" she called aloud.

"Sleep in the kettle...sleep in the kettle," whispered Tojo. "So say the God of Fire."

"That's a good place. I'll be warm and cozy there," murmured the sleepy witch. So she climbed inside the big empty kettle and went to sleep.

"This wicked mountain witch ate all my fish, ate my beautiful cow, and wanted to eat me up, too! Now I'll pay her for her evil ways," thought Tojo. Climbing down quietly, he placed the lid firmly on the kettle and put a big, heavy stone on top of it. Then he lit the wood under the witch's kettle-bed.

The sleeping witch heard faint crackling sounds and mumbled sleepily, "Chu...chu...chu.... Are the birds awake already? Is it time to get up?"

Then the fire began to burn brightly and the mountain witch felt the heat inside the kettle. She tried to get out, but the heavy stone on the lid kept her from doing so.

"God of Fire...God of Fire.... Save me! Help me!" she shouted and screamed.

But there was no one to hear her, for Tojo had run far, far away. And that was the end of the greedy mountain witch!



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